

In QUEST of the NORTHWEST PASSAGE

*The Adventures of Brave Men
in Forlorn Lands*



L. H. NEATBY

In Quest of the **NORTH WEST PASSAGE**

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Illustrated with maps

In 1576, a few months before the adventurer Drake set out to singe the king of Spain's beard, Martin Frobisher sailed from England on the more peaceful mission of opening a short cut to China by way of the northwest. Frobisher, a bold, experienced seaman who had once been accused of piracy, ran into heavy storms off Greenland and kept sailing toward what he thought was the northwest passage but was really the area near the Arctic Circle north of the Americas.

The sea-fever for finding the short cut to China had begun. The next man to seek the passage was John Davis, a boyhood friend of Sir Walter Raleigh. Davis was more interested in pure exploration than Frobisher; he studied the tides north of Greenland and observed the wildlife in the region. Davis' story is told completely and accurately in *In Quest of the North West Passage*.

This book, then, is a well-authenticated account of the search for the northwest passage and of the men who dared to brave unknown lands. It tells about one of the most famous searchers of them all, Henry Hudson, who was set adrift in a small boat by a mutineering crew; it tells about Jens Munck, the Dane who entered Baffin Bay with a crew of ill-fed, scurvy-ridden sailors; Vitus Bering, the Dane who was commissioned to find the pass-

(Continued on back flap)

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In quest of the North West Passage

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Frobisher



Davis Hudson



Button Bylot Baffin Franklin



Parry Ross Simpson





~~~~~ In quest of the North West Passage

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*Leslie H. Neatby*



*In quest of*  
*the* NORTH WEST  
PASSAGE



*Foreword by Dr. J. Tuzo Wilson,  
Professor of Geophysics, University of Toronto,  
President of the International Union  
of Geodesy and Geophysics*

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## Foreword



*Dr. Neatby reminds us that "the names of Cartier and Champlain, of La Salle and La Vérendrye are among the common-places of our elementary schooling" and this is right for they discovered the lands in which the people of North America live, and they opened a country which has become prosperous and powerful. On the other hand "the industrious band of navigators who fought to secure an entry to the continent by the northern passage are all but forgotten" for they left no settlements, and the North West Passage to the Indies which they so long sought proved impractical and useless when at last they found it.*

*To-day there is more interest in the Canadian Arctic than at any time since poor Henry Hudson's mutinous crew returned with promise of an easy passage to the Orient. The geophysical and radar stations have brought more men into the Canadian Arctic than had been seen there since the close of the tragic search for the lost Franklin expedition. The establishment of an international air base at Frobisher Bay on Baffin Island has created a commercial interest in the Canadian Arctic greater than ever before. It is, therefore, most appropriate for Dr. Neatby to publish this excellent account of these early Arctic navigators, of the hopes which sent them time and again into such inhospitable regions, and of their achievements which, "considering their scanty resources and the exceptional climatic difficulties overcome, will bear comparison with the exploits of the Spanish conquistadors and the voyages of the far-ranging sailors of Portugal".*

*The task of recording the exploration of the Canadian Arctic*

*has been, largely, the work of the explorers themselves. They were powerful men, fixed in their purposes, but not necessarily able writers nor unbiased judges of the work of others. We may, therefore, be thankful that this book has been written by a man of broad scholarship and independent view who has clarified and enlivened their story without any loss of sympathy with the men and their exploits. On the contrary, one might accuse Dr. Neatby of seeing all his geese as swans. If he has done so, he has erred on the better side. None but bold men entered the Arctic, and the evaluation of their work is more just when the fine qualities of all are given their due and the petty jealousies and rivalries are forgotten.*

*Those who have no knowledge of the Arctic but whose interest has been stirred by flying the polar route or by reading of the DEW line will find in this book an authoritative and fascinating introduction to tales of brave men and "lands forlorn". Those familiar with the land and its literature will appreciate this quick-flowing review of their heroes and a judicious appraisal of the contribution of each. Dr. Neatby has illuminated the purpose and meaning of otherwise disconnected voyages by placing them in the context of contemporary history; he has maintained the flavour of the old accounts by quoting generously the vivid Elizabethan and eighteenth-century prose. We may be grateful to this fine scholar for having toiled through the wastes of detailed voyaging on our behalf to produce this excellent report of courage, high purpose, and hardihood for our pleasure.*

J. TUZO WILSON

Go Home Bay, Ont.

July 10th, 1958



*To that "gentle goad"*

MY WIFE

*without whom this work  
might never have been accomplished,  
and to the memory of*

ALL DISCOVERERS

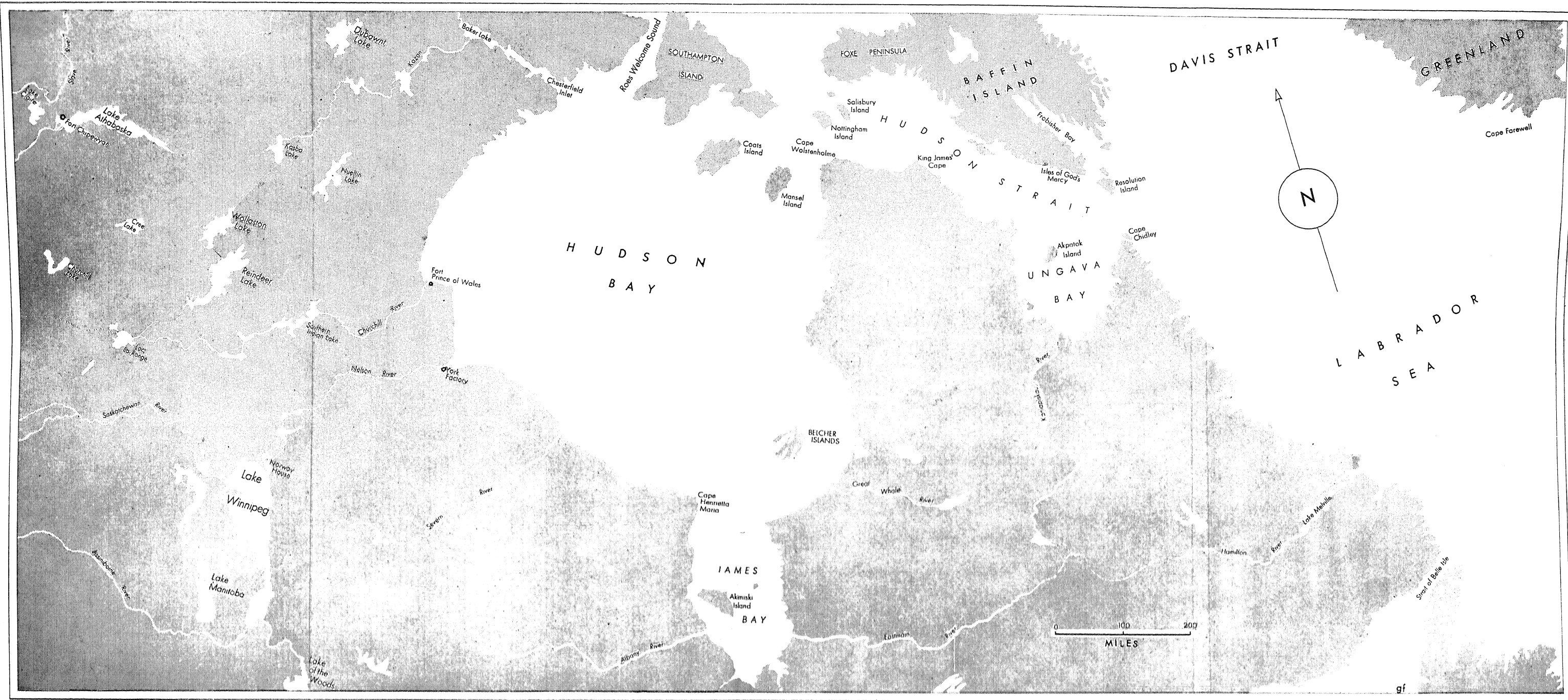
*by land and sea:*

*"Fortunati omnes! si quid mea carmina possunt,  
Nulla dies umquam memori vos eximet aevo."*

*In quest of the North West Passage*











## Chapter I



### Frobisher and Davis, 1576-1587

It has been well said that there is no better way for the student of geography to learn the elements of his science than by reading the lives of the great explorers, and by learning from the outset to associate the natural features which compose his material with the deeds of those who first made them known. In those parts of the world where the older civilizations are seated, and where the map is more ancient than the alphabet, this resource is denied him; but in the continents of America, in the islands of the sea, and in the polar regions it lends his studies a charm which he will find quite irresistible. This natural alliance between history and geography is nowhere more evident than in the story of the search for the North West Passage.

In contrast to the Atlantic coastline of the United States, which is rich in harbours backed by a usually fruitful hinterland, the eastern seaboard of Canada is rugged and unfriendly, affording only grudging admission to a region of barren rock which opposes defence in depth to the advance of the pioneer. Three gaps only are found in this barrier: the St. Lawrence waterway, Hudson Strait, and, far to the north, William Baffin's Lancaster Sound. The first gateway was quickly found and secured by the French. The other two became, in the course of time, the channels of British commercial and scientific enterprise.

Historians have never been slow to recognize the courage and perseverance of the French pioneers who pushed up the St. Lawrence and, braving the dangers of the wilderness, fanned out to explore the Ohio, Mississippi, and Saskatchewan valleys. The names of Cartier and Champlain, of La Salle and La Vérendrye, are among the commonplaces of our elementary schooling. But

the industrious band of navigators who fought to secure an entry to the continent by the northern passages are all but forgotten, or are remembered only from the dismal bays and promontories to which they affixed their names; and the two notable exceptions, Hudson and Franklin, are probably more indebted to the mystery of their deaths than to the solid achievement of their lives for the honour which posterity has done them.

There is, of course, good reason for this comparative neglect. The English explorer was a migrant and an amphibian, who often barely set foot on the Canadian mainland; he carried with him no zealous missionary to chronicle his wanderings; and to this day the area of his search possesses no great centres of population to honour him as their founder. In consequence he remains to Canadians something alien and obscure, while, on the other hand, his achievements do not hold a conspicuous place in the long and gorgeous annals of British maritime enterprise. So he hardly obtained the publicity he deserved, and it was the scientific geographer, not the naval historian, who, in the nineteenth century, rescued the names of Davis and Baffin from the obscurity which till then had enshrouded them.

For the first century and a half of American history, English explorations in Canadian waters had no other object than the discovery of a short route to China. The Bristol-born Genoese, Sebastian Cabot, was perhaps the first to realize that Columbus had not reached the Far East, but a new continent which barred the way to the object of his search, and if the tale he related to the scholar, Peter Martyr, be true, he also made the first attempt to get around the obstacle and sail west to China. "Hee therefore," so he told the Spaniard, "furnished two ships in Englande at his own charges, and first with 300 men directed his course so farre towards the North Pole, that even in the moneth of July he found monstrous heapes of ice swimming in the sea, and in a maner continual daylight, and yet he saw the land in that tract free from ice, which hath been melted by the heat of the sunne." Whatever be the truth regarding this voyage (supposedly about 1502), of which no authentic record exists, the younger Cabot pointed the way by precept if not by example to succeeding navigators, convincing Peter Martyr that "there should be certain great open places" (to the north of America) "whereby the

waters should thus continuously flow from the East unto the West". Cabot himself made no further effort to confirm this hypothesis. After a prolonged visit to Spain he returned to England, and in 1547 became one of the founders of the Muscovy Company, which had as its object trade with Russia and the discovery of the North East route to China by way of the Russian Arctic. In 1553 Sir Hugh Willoughby penetrated into these waters, discovered Nova Zemlya, and perished miserably with his crew in the Lapland winter—the first of those martyrs to the science of geography of which the Anglo-Scottish race has been so prolific. However, a lively trade grew up with Muscovy and for a time occupied the minds of the London merchants, who were then the chief promoters of the commercial enterprise of England.

It was the state of European politics which again forced the North West Passage into prominence. In the early years of Elizabeth I not only the liberties but the commerce of England was threatened by the overweening power of Spain. That kingdom, along with Portugal, was claiming exclusive sovereignty over the continents of America and the adjacent seas, and had established a monopoly so rigid that an English ship could appear there only in the character of a smuggler or a pirate. The Straits of Magellan were closed to peaceful commerce; the forthcoming union of the crowns of Spain and Portugal threatened to convert the South Atlantic into a Spanish lake. Nearer home the Spaniards seemed likely to achieve the conquest of the Netherlands and control of England's ports of entry to the Continent. This growing encirclement emphasized the value of the northern passage, if it actually existed, and in 1576, a few months before Drake set out to harry Spanish shipping in the Pacific, Martin Frobisher sailed on the more peaceful mission of opening a passage to China by way of the north-west.

At the time of his first voyage of discovery Frobisher was nearly forty years of age. He belonged to a good Yorkshire family of Welsh extraction (one can detect the Celt or the Norseman in most of the maritime worthies of England), but was a man of small education. He took to the sea early, engaged for some time in the African trade, and was, on one occasion, called in question by the Privy Council over an alleged act of piracy. Such a

suspicion implied little moral stigma in those days, unless the victim of the supposed offence was a fellow-countryman: Frobisher, though not a scientific navigator of the type of Davis, was a veteran seaman, bold, resolute, and resourceful; and no doubt the promoters of the expedition thought these qualities of more importance than exactness of conduct and the refinements of nautical science in a voyage of uncertain duration through dangerous and uncharted seas.

On June the 7th the little squadron, consisting of Frobisher's *Gabriel* of 25 tons, the *Michael* of 25 tons, and a 10-ton pinnace, set sail from Deptford, passed down the Channel, and steered for the north and west. As they approached Greenland, storms were encountered; the pinnace foundered with all hands; the *Michael*, "mistrusting the matter, privily made its way home", and the men of the *Gabriel* clamoured for their captain to do the same. But it was not for nothing that Frobisher had been appointed to the command. His mainmast was sprung, and his fore-topmast blown overboard, but he held straight on through ice and tempest, silencing his men with the phlegmatic assurance that "the sea at length needs must have an endynge". On July the 26th somewhere to the north of Newfoundland they sighted a cape to which the name of Queen Elizabeth's Foreland was given. Another promontory appeared to the north, and, prevented by the wind from weathering this, Frobisher entered the bay which the headlands formed, and penetrated it to the depth of some fifty leagues, confidently supposing that the land on his left was America, and that to the right Asia. The natives encountered seemed to be tolerably friendly until the disappearance of five men of the *Gabriel*'s crew furnished a wholesome warning against trusting the barbarians too far. Finding no bottom to the inlet, Frobisher put about with the approach of autumn and returned home, reaching England on October the 2nd.

Some fragments of stone brought back by the explorers were judged to contain gold, and despite the somewhat ambiguous response of the finer to whom they were referred, Frobisher was directed to undertake a fresh voyage "onely for the searching of the ore, and to deferre the further discovery of the passage until another time". In 1577 he sailed again to the bay which bore his name, loaded his ships with all the ore they could carry, and

returned home. Samples of the minerals collected were submitted to a board of experts, who, either not first-class analysts, or, it may be, too prudent to explode with abruptness a popular myth, stated that the ore "had appearance and made show of great profit and wealth". Despite this non-committal report, scores of adventurers contributed to the expenses of another voyage, and in May 1578 Frobisher set out with an armada of fifteen sail. This, his third and last expedition, was in trouble from the outset. It passed the south of Greenland "in such a fogge and hideous mist" that only by a continual sounding of drums and trumpets could the convoy be held together, and off Queen Elizabeth's Foreland it encountered pack-ice in a heavy gale. "And thus passed we on in that great danger seeing both ourselves and the rest of the ships so troubled and tossed amongst the ice, that it would make the strongest heart to relent." But there was no panic. When the bark *Dionyse* began to founder the nearest ships stoutly manned their boats and took off her entire crew in safety. As the storm increased in fury, some cut up their cables and hung the strands overboard to deaden the impact of the ice, while others laboured to fend it off with capstan bars, oars, and planks. At daybreak the wind subsided, but the adventurers found themselves cut off from the bay by the ice which the gale had packed in a jagged chaos along the shore. The fog again descended, and for two weeks the fleet remained in perilous nearness to a rocky coast, working out for sea room whenever the visibility was such as to reveal in which direction safety lay. Reckonings were confused by a powerful current of tide—they were, though they knew it not, near the entrance of Hudson Strait. Eventually the fog lifted, the bedraggled ships struggled past Queen's Foreland, and, though much distressed by a fall of snow which lay on decks and hatches a foot thick, came to anchor on July the 30th in the Countess of Warwick's Sound. One ship had been lost; one had returned home; the rest now devoting themselves to the lading of ore, while Frobisher and his "Gentlemen" made short excursions to the interior to discover fresh sources of wealth.

It had been intended to build a house and establish a winter settlement in this region (named by the queen *Meta Incognita*), but the *Dionyse* which carried some of the materials for the

intended structure had been wrecked, and in consequence the scheme was abandoned. A small house of lime and stone was, however, erected on Kodlunarn Island to test the durability of those materials in an Arctic climate. Towards the end of August the homeward voyage was begun, and despite the "outrageous tempest" which scattered the deeply laden vessels, all made port in safety. Considering that the voyage had been undertaken with the irresponsible optimism of a gold-rush, and had met with the foulest of weather, the slight loss sustained reflects the highest credit on the officers and men, and, not least of all, on the "General" who commanded them.

Frobisher never again returned to the Arctic. Owing to the fiasco of the "Oare" he fell into disfavour—most unjustly, for the gold-hunt had been no idea of his—and when next employed it was as a senior officer in the war against Spain. He sailed to the West Indies on a marauding expedition with Drake, held high command against the Spanish Armada, and a few years later was mortally wounded in a petty coastal operation. Not many of the Elizabethan navigators died in their beds.

Frobisher has enjoyed the reputation which, justly no doubt, is granted to the adventurous pioneer, however modest his concrete achievement. His actual discoveries were undervalued, owing to his inaccurate calculation of longitude. For a long time it was supposed that his *Meta Incognita* was part of Greenland. When John Davis sailed past Frobisher Bay, he was so far from suspecting its identity that he re-christened it Lord Lumley's Inlet. But in 1861 the American, Captain C. F. Hall, when searching Baffin Land for traces of the lost expedition of Sir John Franklin, found on Kodlunarn Island the foundations of the experimental structure set up in 1578, and so proved that Lord Lumley's Inlet was the very bay navigated by the ships of Martin Frobisher three centuries before.

The foolish diversion of Frobisher's efforts from discovery to mining discouraged the Arctic enterprise for a few years only. It was soon resumed by one less celebrated than he, but much his superior in solid achievement, John Davis. Davis was born in Devon about 1550, and was as a boy the friend of three famous Elizabethans, Walter Raleigh, and the brothers Humphrey and

Adrian Gilbert. It may have been from association with the local aristocracy that he acquired the general education, and in particular the mastery of mathematics, which he put to such good use in after years; but wherever he got his schooling he must have applied himself as a boy; he followed the sea from the age of sixteen, though in what waters, and whether in war or peaceful commerce is not known. It was as a veteran and well-skilled navigator that in 1585 he received from Queen Elizabeth a charter for the "search and discoverie of the North West Passage to China". The Queen's minister, Sir Francis Walsingham, was patron of the enterprise; a London merchant, Master William Sanderson, was a generous contributor. Another sponsor was a merchant of the name of Hudson, and the curious have indulged in the fancy that this man was the father of Henry Hudson, who now as a boy may have conceived that passion for discovery which haunted him in his later years with such glorious and fatal consequences. On June the 7th Davis sailed from Dartmouth with the *Sunshine* and *Moonshine* of fifty and thirty-five tons respectively. On board the former sailed Master John Janes, nephew to William Sanderson, and throughout his career Davis' devoted friend and admirer.

Greenland was sighted on July the 20th, and as they drew inshore the Devonshire sailors stared open-mouthed at the "deformed, rocky, and mountainous coast"—in the background a vast rounded mountain, overtopping the clouds and fog, to the fore a shore heavily beset with ice, "making such irksome noise that it seemed the true pattern of desolation". Keeping well out to sea to clear the ice, Davis rounded the southern extremity of Greenland (which he named Cape Farewell), and coasted up to the north until he came upon a cluster of green and pleasant islands, backed by a mainland whose barren hills were still snow-covered. Master Janes rather mischievously noted that "the cliffs were all of such Oare as Mr. Frobisher brought from Meta Incognita". From here Davis steered west across the strait which bears his name, and sighted Baffin Land just north of the Arctic Circle. Thence the explorers coasted south, rounded Walsingham and Mercy Capes, and found themselves in an entrance or passage some twenty leagues broad, Cumberland Gulf, which they penetrated to the depth of forty leagues. The coast, says

Janes (always a picturesque narrator), was "barren without woods or grass, the rocks were very faire like marble, full of vaines of diverse colours". Davis carefully studied the tides, hoping to detect a flood coming from the west, but without conclusive result; and on August the 20th the weather set in murky and tempestuous. Not caring to proceed farther under such conditions in restricted and uncharted waters, he sailed for home, and reached Dartmouth in late September.

Davis' second and third voyages conformed to the pattern of the first. All were governed by the theory, held by some as late as the nineteenth century, that at the top of the globe was a vast ice-free space which afforded a safe and easy short-cut to far western longitudes. This "Polar Basin" was the primary object of his search, and on all his expeditions he sailed up Baffin Bay as far as supplies (always the limiting factor in ships ranging from twenty to fifty tons) would permit, before coasting back down the shore of Baffin Land in the hope of finding a western passage at some lower latitude. On his second voyage (1586) he entered his Strait with the *Moonshine*, and a larger vessel, the *Mermaid* of 120 tons, and anchored on June the 29th in latitude 64° off the Greenland coast. Here he spent two weeks, studying the climate and topography and endeavouring with indifferent success to cultivate good relations with the friendly but thieving Eskimos. The season proved a bad one: when he attempted to continue his northward voyage his crews, appalled at the continuous ice and fog, mutinied and insisted on going home. Peremptory assertion of authority was out of the question: Davis loaded the slackers on the *Mermaid* and bade them go, while he with the little *Moonshine* and a picked crew spent the next three weeks in a further survey of the shores of Baffin Land and Labrador. He must have allowed himself plenty of sea-room as he coasted southward, for he missed the gap between Resolution Island and Cape Chidley, which marks the entrance to Hudson Strait, and reported continuous land between latitudes 67° and 57°. In latitude 56°, well down the Labrador coast, he sailed ten leagues into an inlet "two leagues broad and with very faire woods on both sides". The captain landed with a small party and walked six miles inland, noting the variety of trees and the abundance of wild life. Still coasting to the south he came to



anchor at a point where "we had great hope of the passage, finding a mighty great sea between two lands" (Hamilton Inlet?).

To us who know the answers there is something pathetic in the spectacle of this indomitable man of Devon groping among the rocks of Baffin Land and Labrador for the channel that was to conduct him to the Pacific. "We greatly desired to go into the sea," says Davis, "but the wind was directly against us." While the *Moonshine* lay at anchor off this inlet the Indians made a murderous attack on a landing party; Davis slipped his cable, "bare into the shore", and drove off the miscreants with musket fire, but two men were killed and two grievously wounded. As evening came on, the explorers found themselves in an even more terrifying situation: a gale from the north-east smote them, and they were in momentary danger of drowning or of being cast ashore as prey to the "Canibals". One cable had parted; the strands of the other were giving, and "we only roade by an olde Junke". The ship had been unrigged, and the expediency of cutting down the masts was being debated when a lull in the gale permitted the crew to recover the sheet anchor and to moor the ship afresh. "We saw that God manifestly delivered us." When the storm subsided, winds sprang up from the west, and Davis lost no time in weighing anchor and shaping a course for England. He had come down the Labrador coast to about latitude 54° 30' N., a point within two hundred miles of Newfoundland and the northern entrance to the straits of Belle Isle.

On May the 19th, 1587, Davis sailed again from Dartmouth on the last of his Arctic voyages with the *Elizabeth*, the *Sunshine*, and the *Helen*, the last-named being a "clinker" of twenty tons. Owing to some treachery or misunderstanding, he was deserted by the larger ships in Davis Strait and left to prosecute his search alone in the tiny *Helen*. In poor visibility and pinned to the Greenland coast by ice, he pushed northward, until on June the 30th, in 72° 12' N., a higher latitude than he had previously attained, the fog lifted and revealed what he took to be the Polar Basin, "a great sea, free, large, and very salty, and blue, and of unsearchable depth". On the right was a vast overhanging cliff, eight hundred and fifty feet in height, to which Davis, in gratitude to the most generous of his supporters and in joy at the renewed promise of success, gave the name of Hope Sanderson.

"The Passage is very probable and the execution easy," he wrote to Sanderson on his return. But the wind was foul, and the *Helen* too small and unprovided to advance farther into the unknown. So Davis turned west, ran forty leagues to the shore of Baffin Land, rounded Cape Walsingham to the south, and again searched Cumberland Sound, apparently determining that it was no thoroughfare, for Master Janes now terms it a "gulfe". On July the 29th Davis continued his southward voyage, following the course of the previous year, but hugging the coast more closely or favoured with better visibility, for on the 30th he observed the entrance of Frobisher Bay and, failing to identify it, named it Lord Lumley's Inlet. Later in the day he became aware that he was crossing the "entrance or mouth of a great inlet or passage, being 20 leagues broad, and situated between 62 & 63 degrees". As he neared the southerly limit of this gulf (the northern tip of Labrador, named by him Cape Chidley) he perceived that the tide was moving in from the Atlantic, and to his "great admiration" he "saw the sea falling down into the gulf with a mighty overfall, and roaring, and with divers circular motions like whirlpools, in such sort as forcible streams pass through the arches of bridges". Just when he conceived that his summer's work was done, he had (though he never knew it) stumbled on the most significant of his discoveries—he had found the entrance to Hudson Strait.

John Davis, the least warlike of the great Elizabethan seamen, has suffered by comparison with his more glamorous contemporaries. His work was not spectacular, but it was solid. He had made no startling discoveries, but he had dispelled a confused mist of travellers' tales, and had given the world a coherent picture not only of the eastern frontier of America in the higher latitudes but also of the adjoining coast of Greenland. To the west he had pointed the way to Hudson; to the north and north-west he had opened the road for Parry and Franklin, for Kane and Peary. His excursion down the Labrador coast had carried him to within three degrees of the track of Jacques Cartier; and indeed he and the Frenchman together had laid down the Atlantic seaboard of the New World from the Bay of Gaspé to the Arctic Circle, and had left their successors free for the task of filling in the outlines which they had traced with so much toil and danger.

Davis does not appear to have ascribed much importance to his observations off Hudson Strait. But he confidently asserted that "the Passage was free and without impediment toward the North", and had no doubt that his sponsors would provide the means for further discovery in the waters which lay beyond Davis Strait. Fate, however, had decreed that his third polar voyage was to be his last. When he reached England in the autumn of 1587 he found that his country was at last at open war with Spain; 1588 was the year of the Armada. For four years Davis' services were claimed by the navy, and when in 1591 he returned to private life, the project on which he had set his heart was forgotten. Anglo-Dutch victories over Spain had opened up more promising fields for the speculator. Sir Francis Walsingham, too, was gone, and "when his honour dyed the voyage was friendless, and men's minds alienated from adventuring therein". Sanderson, though the same loyal friend as ever, had already contributed far more than his share, and could not furnish out an expedition unaided.

Unable to relinquish the purpose on which he had built such hopes, Davis joined himself with Thomas Cavendish, a noted freebooter of the school of Drake, in an expedition designed for the twofold ends of piracy and science. Their scheme was to take their squadron south through the Straits of Magellan and harry the shipping on the west coast of Spanish America as far as California, from which point Cavendish was to return, while Davis went on to search for the western outlet of the North West Passage. He had no idea of the length of the proposed voyage, knowing only that Drake had sailed up the Pacific coast to approximately latitude  $48^{\circ}$  N., and perhaps believing that from there Corte Real's mythical strait of Anian would afford a passage back to the Atlantic. The calculated risk formed no part of the Elizabethans' scheme of things.

The partnership proved a most unlucky one. Cavendish had none of Drake's qualities except his daring; he had no capacity for handling men under difficult conditions. The expedition ran into bad luck which might have frustrated the best of management; and one by one the ships dropped off and sailed home until Davis was left alone. He made a manful effort to achieve what for him was the real object of the voyage. Steering south from

the Patagonian coast, he pushed through the Straits of Magellan into the Western Sea. For many days thereafter he struggled north up the coast of Chile, in the teeth of gales from the WNW., until the certainty that his crew must starve before reaching the Spanish trade route from Lima to Panama forced the old sea dog to acknowledge defeat. The disappointment was aggravated by the cruel dangers and hardships of the journey home, but Davis showed himself at his best in defeat. One daybreak, off the Straits of Magellan, he was called on deck to find the ship embayed and driving on shore in a furious tempest. The mate, John Pery, shouted that there was no chance of weathering the foreland which lay ahead. Davis' reply might have served as the watchword of his whole career: "You see there is no remedy; either we must double it, or before noon we must die; therefore loose your sails, and let us put it to God's mercy." God's mercy was not withheld; a lull in the wind permitted them barely to clear the promontory; and the navigation of the strait, rendered more than usually dangerous by foul weather, was accomplished, according to Master Janes, only by the unique skill of Davis and Pery. "I conclude," says he, "that the world hath not any so skilful pilots for that place as they are." Wildfowl, killed on the mud flats of Patagonia, furnished a scanty provision for the homeward journey; the officers, notwithstanding fearful privations, maintained order and discipline and brought the ship into harbour, having saved their lives at least from that costly and desperate adventure.

Though Davis had lost the support of the London merchants and had exhausted his private estate, misfortune could neither paralyse his energies nor daunt his spirit. Barred from the practice of his calling, he applied himself with vigour to its theory, and produced two works, *Seaman's Secrets* (1594) and *Hydrographical Treatise* (1595), the latter a re-statement of the arguments of Sebastian Cabot and Sir Humphrey Gilbert for the existence of a North West Passage, supported by the observations of Sir Martin Frobisher and himself. Like the old Hebrew monarch, he was doing his best to promote the work in which he could no longer actively share.

But he was not to escape the tragic end which overtook most of the seamen in that harsh but marvellous age. Emboldened by

the defeat of Spain, the Protestant powers of northern Europe began trading operations with the Far East by way of the Cape of Good Hope; and Davis, whose reputation within his own profession was second to none, was called from retirement to act as chief pilot and cartographer first for the Dutch and then for the English East India fleet. On his third voyage, just off the site of the present city of Singapore, he was killed in an affray with Japanese pirates. In his death he typified the extent of the marine enterprise which he had done so much to promote; his bones rest among the Spice Islands, as far away as the size of the globe permits from the rocky shores of Greenland and Labrador which it had been his life's work to delineate.

## Chapter 2



### Henry Hudson, 1609-1611

ALTHOUGH interest in the short route to China did not wholly die out with the withdrawal of John Davis from the enterprise, it was for some time diverted from the North West to the North East Passage, by way of the North Cape of Norway and the Siberian shore. In 1596 the Dutchman, Barents, reached and wintered on the east coast of Nova Zemlya; in 1607 and 1608 the Englishman, Henry Hudson, was dispatched by the Muscovy Company on two successive voyages, the first an optimistic endeavour to push past Spitzbergen and reach China by vaulting over the Pole, the second a more conservative but equally unsuccessful effort to carry through to a finish the voyage which Barents had so valiantly begun. In 1609 Hudson was employed again, this time by the Dutch East India Company, to make a third trial of the North East Passage, but growing discouraged, or overpersuaded by his crew, he turned back from the North Cape and struck west across the Atlantic. Probing an inlet in the American coast which had been located by the Italian, Verrazano, Hudson discovered and sailed some way up the inland waterway of the Hudson River. His Dutch promoters, though well repaid, as it proved, for their venture, had no opportunity for showing their gratitude, for on his return Hudson was detained in England, censured for undertaking a voyage "to the detriment of his country", and prohibited from again hiring out his services to aliens. Thereupon Sir Thomas Smith, Sir Dudley Digges, and Mr. John Wolstenholme, gentlemen of means and deeply interested in commercial and scientific enterprise, formed an association to send Hudson forth again—west not east—for though the Hudson River had proved no thoroughfare, its discovery revived

the hope that a passage might exist elsewhere. In April 1609 Hudson joined the fifty-five-ton *Discovery* at London, and embarked on his last voyage.

The tragic fate which awaited most of the ship's company has shed a light, which in other cruises we miss, on the characters of the men who composed it. The first mate was Robert Juet, an elderly man, sour, selfish, and, it would appear, not a first-rate navigator. It reveals a weakness in Hudson that, having tested Juet on two previous voyages, he tamely accepted him for a third. Robert Bylot, leading seaman, was a self-effacing, ineffective man in all but purely nautical matters; in those he was competent and resolute to an unusual degree. Two men of the name of Wilson also sailed: Edward, the surgeon, and William, a seaman marked by a certain brutal force of character. Thomas Woodhouse, a mathematician, joined the expedition in the interests of science, as did another landsman, Abacuck Prickett. Prickett was the serving-man of Sir Dudley Digges, correct in deportment, smooth-spoken to all, and, as befitted a Jeeves in the Puritan age, a great student of Holy Writ. Though not exactly cast for the role of hero, he must be credited with his share of manhood for embarking on so harsh and perilous an enterprise, and posterity will ever be in his debt for the simple and moving narrative in which, *inter alia*, his own frailties are so vividly displayed. Philip Staffe, whose heroic devotion was to provide relief to one of the meanest and most squalid crimes on record, was rated as carpenter.

Hudson himself, whose courage and enthusiasm were offset by a pitiful lack of judgement and tact, would have furnished an interesting study to his contemporary, William Shakespeare. Nothing is known of his earlier career, but that he had followed the sea and excelled in his profession is attested by the fact that the traders of two great maritime powers were competing for his services. He was a comparatively old man in 1610, and already a grandfather.

Dropping down the Thames, Hudson touched at Gravesend, and there shipped another hand whose enrolment had not been sanctioned by the promoters of the voyage. Henry Greene was a reckless young libertine, disowned by his father but befriended by Hudson who was doubtless attracted by his boldness of bear-

ing and his physical strength. Greene's mother secretly furnished five pounds towards his outfit—the last sum that the poor lady would be called on to spend on her worthless son.

The little *Discovery* made a prosperous voyage up the east coast of Britain, and on past the Orkneys and Faroes, until, near Greenland, she encountered bad weather and an extensive "mayne of ice". As it was still early in the season, Hudson put back to Iceland and anchored off a comforting region of hot springs to which the sailors ungratefully gave the name of "Lousie Bay". It was here that Greene gave evidence of the evil disposition which was a chief cause of the subsequent tragedy. "He fell out with the Chirurgeon (Edward Wilson) in Dutch, and beat him on shore in English." The crew were enraged, but Hudson, who ought to have regarded this assault on a ship's officer by an unlicensed volunteer as an insult to himself, shielded his favourite. "The Chirurgeon," he told Prickett, "had a tongue that would wrong the best friend he had." Juet, the mate, "would need put his fingers in the embers", by asserting that Greene had been shipped to act as a spy on officers and men. At this Hudson flew into a rage, and was with difficulty deterred from depriving the mate of his post and sending him home with the fishing fleet. Greene, however, "stood upright with the master, and was a very serviceable man in every way for manhood"—the type of James Steerforth and the Master of Ballantrae. Carrying with her these seeds of jealousy and discord the *Discovery* quitted Iceland and steered for the "furious overfall" of John Davis, which we know as Hudson Strait. Near the end of June they "raysed land to the north" (Resolution Island) and fell into "a great ripple or overfall which setteth to the west". So the crew of the *Discovery* entered the strait from which barely a third of their number were to emerge alive.

Hudson Bay is a huge salt-water reservoir, joined to the Atlantic by a channel which is too narrow for the tranquil maintenance of a common level with the ebb and flow of the tide. When the ocean recedes the bay becomes an upland lake, and its outlet a mammoth rapids; when with the rising tide the weight of the Atlantic rests against the continental barrier, water is forced through the one breach in the wall with a commotion which is aggravated by the obstacles of ice and islands, and



produces the "roaring overfall" which so impressed the first white man to see it, though John Davis was no stranger to the wonders of the deep.

The aspect of the north shore of the strait did little to relieve the minds of the explorers, and to divert them from the real dangers which encompassed them. Two centuries later Captain Parry was to find the spectacle of bare mountains and snow-filled valleys, all under a shroud of fog, "indescribably dreary and disagreeable" . . . "It requires a few days," he says, "to be passed amidst scenes of this nature, to erase in a certain degree the impressions left by more animated landscapes; and not until then perhaps does the eye become familiarized, and the mind reconciled to the prospects of utter barrenness and desolation such as these rugged shores present." If the appearance of the strait could so work on the learned Parry and his well-disciplined crews, one can imagine how it affected the timorous, divided crew of Hudson, who had no cohesion or respect for their captain, and whose superstitious fears were magnified by their ignorance of what lay ahead.

Hudson had little to guide him in the midst of these difficulties except the observations of Davis. A Captain George Weymouth had, it is true, approached the overfall in 1602 and perhaps had penetrated some distance into the strait; but his crew had mutinied and turned the ship about before he well knew where he was. In any case, once in the tide-race, Hudson steered not as he would but as he could. It was on June the 25th that he was swept past Resolution Island. Recovering control, he set a course to the NW., until, meeting impenetrable pack, "he cast about to the South, and cleared himself". At the first opportunity he turned again to the NW. to keep the north shore in sight and secure landmarks for himself and future navigators. The ship was fearfully battered by waves and loose ice until he "put her into the cheefest of the ice" where the turbulence of the sea was smothered by heavy floes. "Some of our men this day fell sicke, I will not say it was for feare, though I saw small signe of other grieve . . . Our course was as the ice did lye," continues Prickett, "sometimes to the north, then to the north-west, and then to the west and south-west; but still enclosed with ice . . . The more he strove the worse he was, and the more enclosed till we could

go no further." Even the captain was daunted: he afterwards told Prickett that he "thought that he should never have got out of this ice but there have perished." Near Akpatok Island in Ungava Bay the men mutinied at Juet's instigation, and were clamorous to return. Hudson taunted them with their "wren's hearts", and implored them not to ruin a noble venture on which so much toil had already been spent; and Philip Staffe spoke out boldly in his captain's support. The men's fear and mistrust had not yet reached the point where an example of manhood had no power over them: they returned obediently to their posts and with great labour got the ship into open water. Thence they were carried northwards to a group of islets where ice again forced them to seek harbour. At flood-tide the ship passed over a reef which stood high out of the water at the ebb, and Hudson, in gratitude at this narrow escape, named the cluster the "Isles of God's Mercy". Prickett was unimpressed: he found the region "a most barren place, having nothing on it but splashes of water and riven rocks, as if it were subject to earthquakes". From there they put about to the SW. to round the Upper Savage Islands, named a cape on the Ungava coast Prince Henry's Foreland, and so followed the trend of the shoreline to the NW., naming another promontory King James' Cape (now Cape Weggs), and the east end of Charles Island, Queen Anne's Foreland; from there they were carried north to within sight of Salisbury Island, and thence again to the SW.

And so the indomitable explorer, with both man and nature thwarting him, plied northward and southward as wind and tide constrained him, but always struggling to the west. On August the 2nd, thirty-seven days after passing Resolution Island, he came to a narrow channel, formed by two opposing promontories, which rose in steep and rocky cliffs two thousand feet above the surface of the ocean. Dwarfed by these to mere insect size, the *Discovery* crawled through the gap on to the open waters of Hudson Bay.

Hudson, who had already shown his duty to the Royal Family, was now able to express his gratitude to the men who had made this great exploit possible by naming the cliff to his left, on the Quebec mainland, Cape Wolstenholme, and the one on the right Cape Dudley Digges. He hove to opposite Digges Island and sent

Prickett ashore with a boat's crew. They scaled the cliff, made a quick survey, and returned, reporting "great Store of Fowle", and the best grass they had seen in the New World. Prickett urged Hudson to remain there for a few days, to refresh the crew and kill wild-fowl—good advice, for the ship was victualled for six months only, and of these three and a half were already spent. But Hudson thought that he had won through to the Western Sea, and could not wait until he had converted hope into positive assurance. So he coasted southwards, "confidently proud that he had won the passage". Who can blame him? He had traversed a strait longer and more dangerous than that of Magellan; it is no wonder that he felt convinced that, like Magellan, he had found the Pacific Ocean at the end of it. But as the days went by doubts began to assail him. English buccaneers had, he knew, sailed far up the Pacific shore of America in longitude 125° W. He was in longitude 80°, thousands of miles to the east, yet day after day he saw the shoreline fading away to the south-east, instead of taking the westerly trend that was to bring him to the New Albion of Drake. In early September his hopes were dashed to the ground in the *impasse* of James Bay. Instead of reaching the Spice Islands of Asia, he was brought up in a wretched back-water in the semi-barrens of what is now northern Ontario.

Hudson, who had been keeping up the spirits of his crew by promises of glorious and profitable achievement, now had to endure both his own disappointment and the reproaches of the men he had misled. A taunt levelled at him by Juet provoked him to punish that and other injuries which he had till then overlooked. The mate was deprived of his appointment and the pay attached to it, and Robert Bylot was advanced to fill the vacancy. Samuel Clemens, the boastwain, "who had basely carried himself to our master and the action", was also put from his office, and replaced by William Wilson.

There was nothing wrong with these measures except that they were inopportune and, at this time, had the appearance of being rather an expression of the captain's disappointment and irritation than a calculated act of discipline. Poor Hudson, with a good-nature which does not always accompany high-minded enthusiasm, felt remorse at the act to which he had been provoked, and promised the offenders that if "they would yet bear

themselves honestly he would be a means for their good and forget injuries". He could not perceive that the generosity which would have appealed to noble spirits like his own, in rascals such as they excited nothing but contempt.

After a fruitless cruise around James Bay, Hudson came to anchor about November the 1st at Rupert's Bay in its SE. angle, and set the men to work hunting and fishing—a step which he should have taken earlier for there was no assured food-supply nearer than Cape Digges, "where the Fowle breed"; and Cape Digges was six hundred miles to the north, quite inaccessible until the following midsummer.

About this time, in consequence of the death of the gunner, John Williams, the party became involved in another squalid quarrel. It was the practice in such cases to dispose of the deceased seaman's property by auction before the mast; but on this occasion Hudson took a cloth gown that had belonged to Williams and gave it to his favourite, Greene, telling the offended crew that "he should have it, and none else". Now, when winter had come on in dead earnest, he commanded Staffe to build a house on shore. The carpenter had asked permission to do so when the ship was first embayed and had met with a peevish refusal: he now exclaimed that "the Snowe and the Frost was such that he neither could nor would goe in hand with such worke, which when he (Hudson) heard, he ferreted him out of his cabine and struck him, and calling him many foule words, threatened to hang him". Staffe was a good servant, but no slave: he retorted that he knew his work better than Hudson; he was no house carpenter, and not bound to be employed as such. After sulking a few days, however, he repented and built a house "with much labour". But before the quarrel was composed, Master Greene, apparently from pure love of mischief, was very attentive to Staffe, sought out his company and went hunting with him. Hudson, thus provoked, and rendered more irritable by the consciousness of having wronged Staffe, was petty enough to deprive Greene of his grey cloak and transfer it to Bylot, railing on the former, and taunting him with vices which he certainly possessed, but which had been well known to the commander when he enlisted Greene in his service. The unfortunate captain's judgement must have been deranged by the intolerable

stresses of the voyage and the disappointment with which it terminated, for never has a man so great in the rarer qualities of leadership shown himself more inept in its routine functions. He had forfeited the respect of his crew, wounded the feelings of his trustiest officer, and made an enemy of young Greene, who, no more than Juet, was likely to be restrained by considerations of honour or prudence in obtaining his revenge.

"To speak of all the troubles of this cold winter," says Prickett, "would be tedious." Nevertheless "God dealt mercifully with them" in sending an abundance of willow ptarmigan. With the approach of spring these vanished and were replaced by fowl of various sorts, "Swannes, Goose, Ducke, and Teale, but hard to come by." Those of the crew who were not disabled by scurvy joined in the hunt for food of any description, "how vile soever". Mosses were collected, and frogs. Thomas Woodhouse, the mathematician, brought in tamarack buds, and from these the surgeon prepared a decoction which gave some relief to his scurvy-ridden shipmates. With the break-up of the ice around the anchorage, fishing was resumed but with indifferent success; the few Indians met with were neither friendly nor helpful. No resource remained but the homeward voyage, for which they were desperately unprovided.

Hudson had forfeited much respect by his scandalous quarrel with Staffe. Before sailing he further impaired his prestige by removing Bylot from the office of mate and replacing him with one John King. The crew exclaimed that King could neither read nor write, and that with so ignorant a mate the captain could take the ship wherever he would. The *Discovery* was a nest of uncertainty, distrust, and hatred when, about the middle of June, she quitted her anchorage and began to make her way out of James Bay through the ice which still encumbered its surface.

Immediately after weighing anchor Hudson divided, or professed to divide, what remained of the provisions in equal portions among the members of his crew. Failing some windfall, that must sustain them until Digges Island was reached. But the notion was abroad that he had a reserve of food concealed, and when William Wilson complained that there were extra supplies on hand for the captain's favourites, Staffe strengthened the belief by replying that some men had to be "kepte upp".

Probably he was merely using sarcasm to express his contempt for Wilson's jealous suspicions; but the boatswain took him seriously. He conferred with Greene and Juet, and between them a plot was hatched to turn the captain and the invalid members of the crew adrift to starve, while they and their sturdy accomplices secured enough food to ensure their survival. Greene, the gentleman's son, had conceived a contempt for Prickett, the gentleman's servant, and would have jettisoned him with the rest; his fellow-conspirators prudently insisted that he should be spared, and used to procure their pardon through Sir Dudley Digges.

One evening, about June the 20th, the *Discovery* being then becalmed in heavy pack off Charlton Island, Greene and William Wilson entered Prickett's cabin, and acquainted him with their intention of mutinying and marooning Hudson along with their invalid mates. Only fourteen days' rations remained; the master's intentions were still vague; they were determined to "mend or end". To Prickett's warning that they were committing a capital offence they replied that they preferred the chance of the gallows to the certainty of starvation, and were saving his life as well as their own. Prickett, with unconscious self-revelation, said that he was loath "to hurte himself" by becoming accessory to a felony, whereupon Greene politely hinted that, if such were the case, they would not keep him on board against his will. The frightened serving-man muttered in a neutral voice, "The will of God be done."

At this young Greene quitted the cabin in a rage, swearing that he would cut the throat of any man who disturbed him in his purpose. Wilson judged his man better. He coolly reasoned that they were admitting Prickett to the plot "for the love they bore him"; that it was no longer possible to alter their plan or defer its execution; for Hudson would get notice of it and do them the mischief which they intended for him. Prickett was weakening when Greene re-entered and demanded what he said. Wilson, with the bold villain's contempt for the virtuous weakling, replied, "He is in his old song, still patient". Thereupon Greene, the atheist, took up Prickett's Bible and offered to bind himself with an oath to "do no harm". The others, he added, should do the same, and Prickett availed himself of this miserable pretext

to withdraw his opposition. That the conspirators were committing premeditated perjury, he well knew, but probably reflected that it was their crime, not his.

Greene and Wilson took the oath, and sent Juet in to do the same. The former mate was even more resolute than Greene, and vowed that he would "justify" the deed at home. Then came two stout rogues, Thomas and Pierce, followed by one Motter, and Benet Mathues, the cook. These latter were ignorant fellows, and Prickett, thinking to shake their purpose, asked, "if they were well advised what they had taken in hand?" Both answered that they were, and "therefore came to take their oath". It was borne in upon Prickett that, do what he would, he was to be made partner in a capital crime.

The night was pitch black, and fearing that Greene and Wilson might take advantage of the darkness to do an act of naked murder that would involve all who were privy to the plot in unpardonable guilt, he called to them from his cabin door, and whispered an entreaty that they would defer action until day-break. To this they yielded a ready consent; Prickett, they saw, dared not betray them; and as the preconcerted plan was theirs, it was they who stood to lose by fumbling in the dark. The well-meaning but frightened serving-man was left quaking in his cabin, and hoping that "some one or other" (but not Abacuck Prickett) "would give notice either to the carpenter, John King, or the master".

At break of day Greene went aft with one other man to hold Philip Staffe in conversation, and, if need be, to restrain him forcibly. Hudson, on emerging from his cabin, was seized by Mathues and Thomas, while William Wilson bound his hands from behind. He asked what they meant; they told him "he should know when he was in the shallop". John King, the new mate, apprised of what was happening, made an onslaught on Juet with his sword; he was overpowered and flung into the boat. The rest of the intended victims, surprised, drowsy, and enfeebled by sickness, made little resistance; one by one they were dragged along the deck and dropped into the shallop. The unlucky mathematician, Woodhouse, pleaded hard for life but without avail. The captain's son, John Hudson, was too dangerous a witness, so he too was thrust overboard. Edward Wilson

and Prickett made a half-hearted protest, but were warned in menacing tones that they were well—let them “keep themselves soe”—whereupon they slunk out of sight.

One man on board had neither the surgeon's learning nor Prickett's formal piety, but something more fundamental. Philip Staffe had hitherto been restrained by persuasion or force; he now came forward and asked the mutineers “if they would be hanged when they came home”; and as for himself, he said, “he would not stay in the ship unless they would force him.” Sullenly “they bid him go then, for they would not stay him. ‘I will,’ said he, ‘so I have my chest and all that is in it.’” His shipmates, rather shamefacedly, one hopes, lowered the tool chest into the shallop, and, touched with pity, added some weapons, an iron pot, and a little meal. Staffe swung overboard, and his figure was merged in the little cluster of doomed men in the boat. When all was over, the *Discovery* made sail, towed the shallop out of the ice where they were embayed, and cut her loose. Hudson was last seen sitting in the stern of the boat, a rigid figure, clad in a motley gown. He had followed the will-o'-the-wisp of the North West Passage north to Spitzbergen, east to Nova Zemlya, and up the Hudson River. To this end it had brought him at last.

The mutineers ran some distance to the north, took in their topsails, and lay to under foresail only, while they ransacked the ship for the provisions which she was supposed to conceal. They turned up some pork, pease, biscuit, and meal, disappointing in quantity, and no more than a reasonable emergency reserve. Then the cry arose that the shallop had come into sight and was following them, whereupon “they let falle the maine saile and out top sailes, and fly as from an enemy.” The castaways in the shallop, who must have seen in the heaving to of the ship promise of pity and deliverance, were cruelly disappointed by the spectacle of her hull and masts slowly sinking below the skyline, and knew that they were lost indeed.

In a hurried whisper to Prickett, Staffe had expressed the conviction that the maroons would again be taken on board, “for there was not one man in all the ship who could tell how to carry her home.” And had the navigation of the *Discovery* depended on Juet, to whose incompetence Staffe was plainly alluding, the honest carpenter's confidence might have been



justified. But the young scoundrel Greene, though himself no seaman, had perceived that Robert Bylot had all the skill and intelligence required for the management of the ship, and, on being named captain, appointed Bylot as his mate. The latter had kept to his cabin while the mutiny was in progress, supposing, as he afterwards stated, that the conspirators intended merely to restrain Hudson while they searched the ship and then restore him to his command. Perhaps he spoke the truth, for Staffe seems to have been deceived in the same way.

Greene now informed Prickett that it was "the companie's will" that he occupy the master's cabin, take charge of the records, and issue rations. Poor Prickett, who saw that this promotion would mark him, in the eye of the law, as a ringleader, and prevent him from separating his defence from that of the actual doers of the crime, pleaded hard for the claim of Juet to the post. Greene replied contemptuously that Juet should not meddle with it. The cantankerous old mate had reaped nothing but scorn from the mutiny which his misconduct had helped to provoke.

The wild-fowl at Cape Digges were their only resource to avert starvation, but there was no agreement as to the direction in which it lay. The prolonged voyaging in James Bay during the previous autumn had confused the reckoning. Juet declared that their course lay to the NW., Bylot to the NE., and to that point he steered, tormented, as the weeks advanced, by the contradictions of Juet and the murmurs of the crew, who finally began to assert that he had overshot the island on which their hopes depended and was sailing into the unknown. Captain Greene stood by his mate (he had learned from Hudson's fate what changing favourites meant), and Bylot, with the confidence of a man who is master of his trade, held steadily to his course. Five weeks after the mutiny "with great joy they raised the Cape", and made all sail for Digges Island. On July the 27th they landed and spent the day killing wild-fowl. On the 28th a numerous, and apparently friendly, band of Eskimos was met.

The following day Greene, who was confident of obtaining from the natives adequate supplies for the homeward voyage, manned the boat with five men, Prickett, Thomas, William Wilson, Motter, and Pierce, and pulled in to a convenient landing-

place. Prickett, still lamed by scurvy, was left to care for the boat; the others landed and were surrounded by Eskimos, "dancing and leaping". Of the white men Greene alone was armed with the broken haft of a pike; his comrades had no weapons of defence. The *Discovery* was out of sight, hidden behind a high and rocky cape.

While his comrades on shore were engaging the attention of the natives with looking-glasses and other trinkets, Prickett noticed that one of the savages had detached himself from the main group, and was wading towards the boat. More prudent or more timorous than the rest, he made signs to the native to keep away, and when the latter hesitated, repeated his gestures with more sternness. While his attention was thus occupied, he was startled to see a leg flung over the gunwale, and in a moment another Eskimo swung himself on board and made a murderous stab at Prickett's ribs, which the latter only partially parried. But the Englishman, though lamed, was of great bodily strength: he avoided another blow by grappling closely with his savage assailant, and ("God helping him," he characteristically observes) found the hilt of his Scottish dirk and plunged it into his enemy's throat. Meanwhile bloody work was afoot on shore. The Eskimos had set upon Greene, Thomas, Pierce, and Wilson, stabbing and slashing at the abdomen. Adrian Motter, who had strayed along the beach, swam off unhurt, and clung to the stern, while his comrades came tumbling towards the boat. Pierce, though mortally wounded, snatched an axe from one of his pursuers and struck him dead; Greene, crying "Coragio" and laying about him with his truncheon, secured the retreat of the rest. About the boat all was confusion and uproar, Prickett shouting hoarsely to the fugitives to put the boat's head about, Motter, exhausted from his swim, crying and pleading to be taken on board. Pierce, who was evidently a man of extraordinary resolution, dying as he was, had the strength to shove the boat off and drag in Motter. At that the Eskimos gave over the pursuit and let go a flight of arrows which killed Greene outright, and gave Prickett a grievous wound in the back. Pierce and Motter took to the oars in panic fear lest the Eskimos should give chase in their canoes; Pierce fainted just as they were clearing the headland, but Bylot saw that something was amiss and drew inshore to

the rescue. The body of the unhappy Greene, who had that day given proof of a courage and high spirit worthy of a better man, was cast straightway into the sea; his wounded comrades were hoisted on board. Wilson died within a few hours, "cursing and swearing in the most feareful manner", Thomas and Pierce, a day or two later. With the exception of Juet, all the principal mutineers had been cut off, perhaps even before the captain whom they had so pitilessly betrayed. Nine men remained to work the ship home.

Four hundred fowl in all had been killed and salted down; and with this scanty addition to their provisions the survivors had to content themselves. Their *per capita* ration was a little meal, fowl's bones fried in tallow, "putting vinegar thereto", and, once a week, a pound of candles. With a handful of disorderly, underfed rogues, numbering scarcely a third of the ship's complement, the new commander piloted her through all the hazards of Hudson Strait and across the North Atlantic.

Of whatever faults Bylot had been guilty, he more than atoned for them by his dauntless constancy on that terrible voyage. He had to do his own work and the men's too: they were weak, indifferent, and unresponsive to command. Juet, mischievous to the last, was unmanning his shipmates by assuring them that they were nearing Ireland, when Bylot knew it to be two hundred leagues away. At last the old mate died—"for meere want"—deprived, perhaps, of his just share by his stronger comrades, whom he had first taught to rob the helpless. "All our men were in despaire, and said wee were past Ireland, and our last fowle were in the steep tub. So our men cared not which end went forward, insomuch as our master was driven to looke to their labour as well as his owne; for some of them would sit and see the fore sayle or mayne sayle flie up to the tops, the sheets being either flowne or broken, and would not helpe it themselves, nor call to others for helpe, which much grieved the master." (Here is the only glimpse which the dramatic narrator can afford us of the man Bylot: he had seen much bickering on the voyage out, and grim deeds on the way back; but his emotions remained unstirred except by torn canvas and fraying tackle.) "In this extremity it pleased God to give us sight of land"—the coast of Cork. Thence, after pawning their cable to secure food

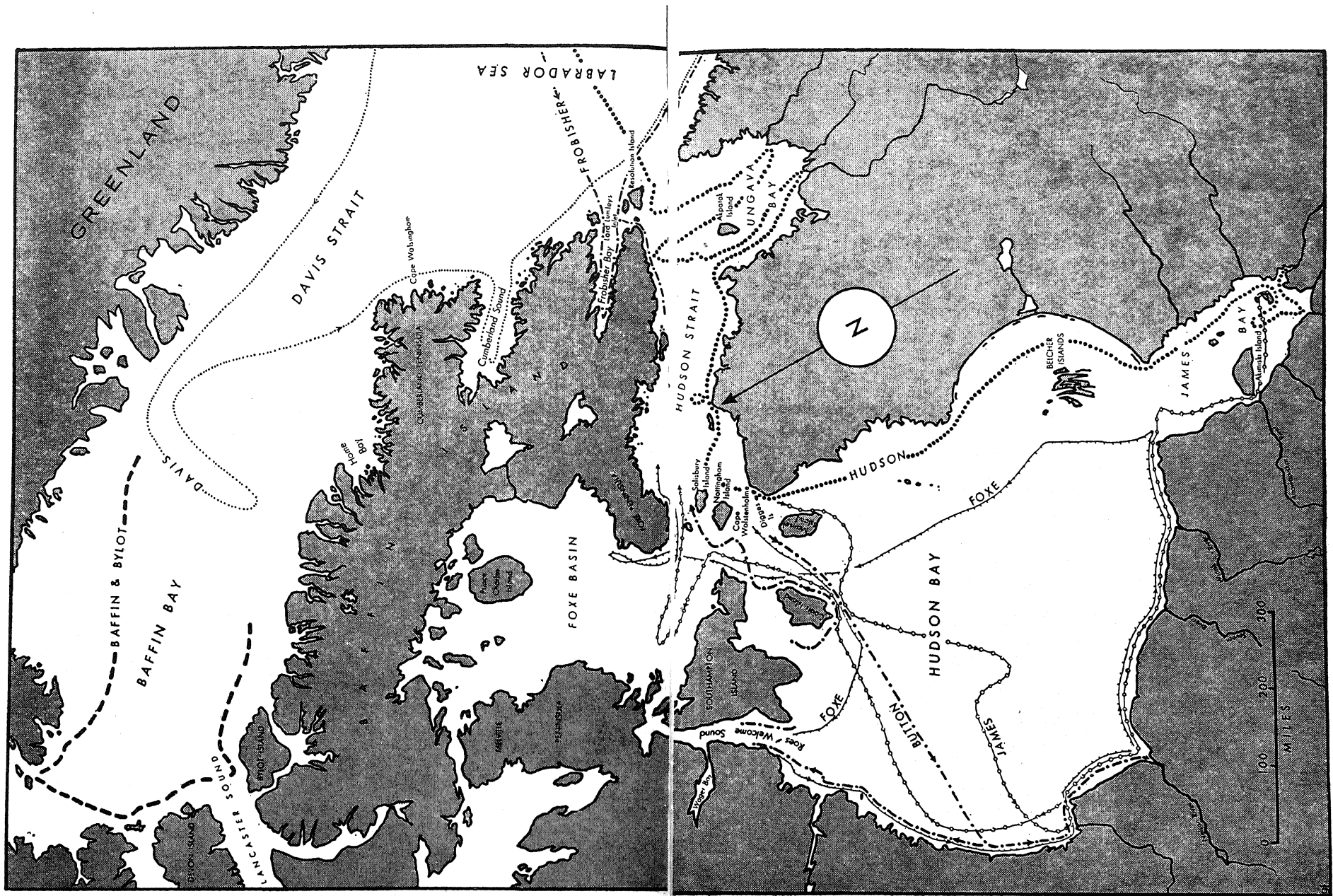
and a few sturdy hands to assist them, the crew of the *Discovery* made their way to London. It was a wretched homecoming for the eight creatures who remained—starved, ashamed, and frightened, they well knew that the lives which they had preserved with such pain were forfeit to the hangman.

As soon as the ship was docked, Bylot took with him the plausible Prickett and reported to Sir Thomas Smith. Later the eight men were examined by the Masters of Trinity House, who gave it as their opinion that “they all deserved to be hanged”. And it has been to some a matter of wonder that this hint was not taken and some at least of the *Discovery*’s crew sacrificed to the shades of the murdered Hudson. No country, least of all one with so much wealth invested in sea-borne trade, could overlook the offence of mutiny on board ship, or make any distinction between those who did the deed and those who did not exert themselves to prevent it. Yet it seemed cruel and ungrateful to proceed to extremities against Bylot to whose courage and professional skill it was due that the records of the expedition had not perished with him who led it. The man who had saved Hudson’s “Card” and brought the *Discovery* home had put geography and (it was hoped) commerce deeply in his debt. On the other hand, if he were spared, his humbler shipmates could not in fairness be touched. These doubts were strengthened in the minds of the authorities by the consideration that Hudson might yet be alive, and, if so, could be rescued and brought home to point out the truly guilty. So Bylot and Prickett were allowed to sail again to the Bay with Sir Thomas Button, and, when his report was found inconclusive, Bylot was employed as captain on two more voyages to Canadian waters.

When all this was over, in 1618, Prickett, Edward Wilson, and two seamen were brought to trial for the crime committed seven years before. The authorities probably felt that some judicial formality was due to the memory of Hudson, but when Bylot had been spared and given honourable employment, they had no desire to obtain a conviction against the rest. The charge was not mutiny, of which all were technically guilty, but murder, which could be proved against none. All four were acquitted.

For the details of Hudson’s tragedy we are chiefly dependent on Prickett’s journal. Its exactness has been called in question,

and there can be no doubt that its author has coloured the narrative in his own favour as any man would who records events in which he plays, at best, a mean and unheroic part. But it is difficult to believe that his story is wilfully distorted. It rings too true. The scene where the guilty conspirators, Greene and Wilson, steal into Prickett's cabin to unfold their plot; young Greene's peevish impatience with his conscientious objections; the coolness of the older sinner, Wilson, who sees that the frightened lackey has not the manhood to resist or expose them—all these have a realism beyond the power of invention. Whatever we think of its author, Prickett's journal is one of the most striking primary documents in Canadian history, a vivid and effortless portrayal not only of men's actions, but also of the fears and passions that give them birth.



Showing the main voyages of Frobisher, Davis, Hudson, Button, Baffin and Bylot, Foxe, and James.



## Button, Bylot, and Baffin, 1612-1616

IN May 1612, the year after the return of the *Discovery*, Captain Thomas Button sailed from England with orders to follow up the clues discovered by Hudson and, if possible, not to return "without either the good news of a passage, or sufficient assurance of an impossibility".

Hudson's dramatic discovery of the Strait and the Bay which lay beyond it, coupled with the hopes studiously fostered by Bylot and Prickett, procured for the expedition generous help in men and material. Henry, Prince of Wales, was patron to the enterprise; Button, himself a veteran seaman who had won distinction in the wars of Elizabeth, was furnished with two ships, the *Resolution* and the old *Discovery*, a staff of experienced officers, and rations for eighteen months. Bylot and Prickett accompanied the expedition, though, naturally enough under the circumstances, without any official appointment.

Hudson Strait was passed without any disaster, and a landing made on Digges Island where five seamen were killed by the Eskimos, a misfortune which, after the incident of the previous year, surely argues gross carelessness on the part of the officers or disobedience on the part of the men. From there it was determined to sail west. This meant abandoning the rescue of Hudson, which Button had been expressly commanded to attempt; but we may suppose that Bylot and Prickett, who had in England stressed the possibility of his survival, had grown more realistic as the danger of prosecution receded, and advised the captain that the chance on which they had formerly laid such emphasis was not such as to justify diverting the expedition from its main purpose of discovery.

Button therefore steered west, and, having traversed several hundreds of miles without obstruction, was brought up by the mainland, the west coast of Hudson Bay. He named this region Hopes Check'd, and turning to the left, felt his way around the inlet into which the Churchill River empties, and coasted to the south. About latitude  $57^{\circ}$  N. a satisfactory harbour was found, Port Nelson (so named after Button's sailing master, who died there), and there the two ships put up for the winter.

The hinterland was found to abound in wild life, and much game was killed, but, despite this circumstance, and the fact that the ships were well supplied, their crews did not escape the sickness which had so grievously weakened the followers of Hudson. Several men died, and many more were prostrated by disease. Button tells us that he was disabled all winter, but "began to mend the 24 of January"—a statement which has an odd sound to those acquainted with the usual duration of winter in those regions.

Beyond Port Nelson the coast was found to take a southeasterly trend towards the inner bay where Hudson had been so lamentably disappointed. Button therefore sought the opinion of his officers, who counselled him to search to the north, "Untill, if it be possible, we may finde the Flood comming from the Westward"—the strong tide, welling in from the Pacific, which all the explorers looked for with such pathetic constancy. In pursuance of this advice, Button, in the summer of 1613, retraced his course to Hopes Check'd and, though many of his company were still disabled by sickness, conducted a manful search up the channel between the mainland and Southampton Island, later named by Luke Foxe, Roe's Welcome. The ships were continually endangered by tempestuous winds and a rocky coast, and on July the 29th in hazy weather Button made up his mind that he was embayed and that no sea lay to the north. He turned back from about latitude  $65^{\circ}$  and made his exit from the bay through incessant storm and fog. His appointed task had been well performed; he had charted some six hundred miles of shoreline and virtually proved Hudson Bay an *impasse*, and, by locating the estuaries of the Nelson and Churchill Rivers, had pointed the way to the fur-traders who were to come after him.

Despite his achievement, Sir Thomas Button has suffered the



obscurity which is commonly the lot of the explorer who has made no wholly original discovery, nor has focused attention on himself by some signal disaster. During his lifetime his services were acknowledged by map-makers who called the inland sea by his name, and though the transfer of that honour to Hudson is the merest justice to that martyred pioneer, it is still to be regretted that Button's name is preserved only in a couple of insignificant geographical features of which few people have ever heard.

The comprehensive survey of Sir Thomas Button, and its negative result, provided a disappointing anticlimax to the dramatic voyage of Hudson and destroyed the hopes of the official persons who had promoted the venture. But the London merchants, who had already sacrificed so much in the cause of discovery, did not give up so easily, and in 1615 those four worthies, Smith, Digges, Wolstenholme, and Jones equipped and manned the *Discovery* of Hudson for another venture to the west.

On this voyage Robert Bylot was in chief command. He had, one supposes, been freed from the threat of prosecution which still hung over the other members of Hudson's crew, or his employers would scarcely have ventured so to distinguish him. With him there sailed as pilot a man of more striking personality to whom has been accorded by posterity the chief credit for the discoveries which their joint efforts achieved. William Baffin seems to have been better qualified as a scientific navigator than his captain, and, though not highly educated, he had a quick perception, imagination, and a natural gift for vivid narrative. He had acquired his training as a seaman in the Greenland whale fisheries.

As Button's survey left little hope of a passage to the west or south-west, Bylot and Baffin, on entering the bay, passed far to the north of Capes Digges and Wolstenholme, and directed their course so as to strike the mainland to the north of Button's farthest in 1613. On clearing the south-west extremity of Baffin Land (Foxe Peninsula), they steered north, and, encountering heavier ice, stood away to the eastward, "to be certainly informed of the tyde"—it came from the east. So again they put

about, "having a great swellinge sea out of the west with the winde which had blowne: which put us in some hope". They passed up the NE. coast of Southampton Island, and on July the 12th hoisted out a boat to determine the set of the tide; it was reported to come from the north; the ship was also observed to drift north with the ebb of the tide. Six leagues to the west they could make out a headland to which Bylot cheerfully gave the name of Cape Comfort, as he could see an open passage beyond.

But it was not to be. "There our sudden hopes weare as soon quayled, for next morning, having dubbled the cape . . . we sawe the lande trendinge from the cape round aboute by the west tyll it bore north-east and by east, and very thick pestred with ice . . . with smale showe of any tyde." They were at the entrance of Frozen Strait, and the bulging base of Melville Peninsula was already reaching out behind them. Actually there was a narrow ocean lane to their left, but it would only have led them down Roe's Welcome to the region explored by Button. Baffin's judgement was correct: "Surely, without any question, this is the bottom of the bay on the west side."

The explorers put about and retraced their course, Baffin continuing to record latitudes and soundings with an accuracy which won the admiration of Sir Edward Parry when he visited those waters in 1821. He measured the tide at the easternmost point of Southampton Island (Seahorse Point), and again at Nottingham Island. With composed realism he concluded that the flood came from the SE., and the ebb from the NW., "despite diverse reports of predecessors". There was no trace of a counter-influence from the Western Ocean.

On reaching England, Baffin, as spokesman for his inarticulate captain, reported that if any passage existed by way of the Bay, it was "but some creeke or inlet", and that any further search should be directed to the open sea discovered by Davis beyond his Strait. His patrons were as ready as he for another endeavour. In the spring of 1616 the *Discovery* sailed with Bylot and Baffin again in charge, rounded the south end of Greenland, and pushed up Davis Strait. On May the 30th they reached Davis' farthest at Hope Sanderson, and entered upon a region of original discovery.

This voyage, one of the most fruitful in the history of maritime discovery, was undistinguished by incident other than the com-

monplaces of toil, hardship, and danger. From Hope Sanderson Bylot and Baffin tried in vain to force their way through the pack to the west. So north they went, though the wind was foul, up the Greenland coast, noting the rapid decay of the ice in the Arctic summer, but observing that the weather was variable—few days without snow or freezing rain: they could “scarce handle” ropes and shrouds. Eventually they reached open sea, cleared by the southward movement of the pack in Baffin Bay, passed a “fair cape or headland”, which they named after Sir Dudley Digges, and arrived at Wolstenholme Sound, “a fit place for the killing of whales”, Baffin notes. Here the weather set in so tempestuous that their anchors would not hold and they were forced to haul off shore and endure the force of the gale in the open sea. Ultimately they were driven into Whale Sound, but again failing to find a bottom where the anchors would hold were compelled to stand to and fro in the sound until the gale abated. Faring forth again, they descried another sound to the north, reaching beyond latitude  $78^{\circ}$  and guarded at its entrance by two noble headlands, the Capes Isabella and Alexander of Sir John Ross. This was Smith Sound, for two hundred and thirty-seven years the highwater mark of polar exploration in that longitude. It was not until 1853 that Dr. Kane of the United States Navy thrust his little brig through the sound into the basin which lay beyond, and, after two years of fearful hardship, brought back his starving, shipwrecked crew, having opened the channel which in the first decade of this century was to conduct Peary to the Pole.

Bylot and Baffin guessed nothing of this; they judged, as Sir John Ross did after them, that the sound was closed and that they were in a landlocked bay. Being in urgent need of a secure anchorage which would permit them to rest the crew on land, they stood away to the west and south. On July the 10th, in calm and foggy weather, they were off Alderman Jones Sound, still searching in vain for an anchorage. On the 12th “we were open of another great sound” (to the west), “lyeing in the latitude of  $74^{\circ} 20'$ ”. Digges, Wolstenholme, Smith, and Jones had already been distinguished on the chart of the grateful Baffin: this feature he named after Sir James Lancaster. Lancaster, the last of the voyage’s patrons to be so remembered, has reaped the richest

reward in posthumous celebrity; his sound has proved to be the true entrance to the North West Passage for which the Elizabethans searched in vain; it was traversed in later times by the great hearts—Parry, Ross, Franklin, McClure, McClintock, and Amundsen—and is today the eastern channel for sea-borne traffic to the islands of the Canadian North.

But Baffin was misled, like the unlucky John Ross after him, into supposing that the ice-choked strait was an inlet merely. "Here our hope of a passage began to lessen every day." They were still held off shore by an impenetrable barrier of ice, and a gale from the NE. all but flung the ship on to it. At the first opportunity, therefore, Bylot hauled to the SE., and striking diagonally across Baffin Bay made the coast of Greenland at latitude  $65^{\circ}$ . There they found an abundance of scurvy-grass, and boiled it in beer as a restorative for the disease-ridden crew. Thence they sailed for home.

The *Discovery* reached Dover on August the 30th, 1616, forty years and three months after Martin Frobisher sailed on his first polar expedition. In that short period, with little encouragement, next to no material support from the government, and unrewarded by any returns in commerce or plunder, the merchants and seamen of England had defied with few considerable exceptions the eastern shores of Canada and Baffin Land, and the coast of Greenland opposite up to the  $78^{\circ}$  of latitude, an achievement, which, considering their scanty resources and the exceptional climatic difficulties overcome, will bear comparison with the exploits of the Spanish conquistadors and the voyages of the far-ranging sailors of Portugal. That obscure and ambiguous character, Robert Bylot, had participated in the greater part of these extensive discoveries: he had sailed with Hudson and Button, besides taking command of the two latest expeditions, and, though Baffin's gifts as a scientist and a narrator have enabled him to overshadow his captain to an unusual degree, Bylot as chief officer must be given credit for the speed and comparative security with which the last two voyages were made, and for their freedom from loss of life. Nothing is known of the later life of the man who saved the relics of Hudson's expedition and carried on his work. He appears as an able seaman on board the *Discovery* in 1610. In the same inconspicuous manner he dis-

appears from history when the *Discovery* was paid off in 1616. His monuments are the inland seas to which Hudson and Baffin have given their names.

Bylot's more glamorous helper was destined, like John Davis, to a violent death in eastern seas. Baffin's reputation as a navigator secured him an appointment with the East India Company; he spent some years in trade with the Orient, and won the approval of his employers for hydrographic surveys in the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf. These peaceful activities were interrupted by the wars which European traders carried on in those waters with little reference to the state of politics at home. In 1622 Baffin participated in an Anglo-Persian attack on the Portuguese station at Ormuz on the Persian Gulf. He was taking angles to determine the height of the enemy fortifications when "he received a shot into his belly, whereat he gave three leaps, and died immediately". A mortal wound in a semi-piratical skirmish was a fitting end for the last of the great mariners of the Elizabethan era.



## North American Discovery, 1616-1819

THE withdrawal of William Baffin from polar discovery and his violent death in a trade war were symbolic of a change that was coming over the mercantile policies of his own and other countries. The energy of Spain and Portugal, which had taken the lead in the overseas expansion of Europe, had spent itself; while for the next century and a half England, France, and Holland gave up speculative exploration and concentrated on the commercial exploitation (often fiercely competitive) of regions already discovered. When, in 1763, Great Britain had achieved supremacy in the world's trade routes, and the work of maritime discovery was resumed by Bougainville, Cook, and La Perouse, it was directed by governments, not merchants, and had as its chief purpose scientific discovery rather than commercial gain.

In Canada, as elsewhere during this period, the interests of geography were subordinated to those of trade. One or two more ineffectual attempts were made to find the western passage which Baffin had declared did not exist. In 1619 the Dane, Jens Munck, entered the Bay with two ships, and, following Button's course, reached the continent and wintered at the mouth of the Churchill River. His crews, ill-fed and insufficiently clad, were attacked by scurvy with extreme severity; all but Munck and two others died. With the coming of spring and an abundance of fish these three recovered their strength and actually succeeded in working the smaller of the two ships out of the Strait and back to Denmark—a feat of courage and endurance which entitles Munck to an honoured place in the early history of Canada. In 1631 the Bay was visited by two English captains, Luke Foxe of Hull and Thomas James of Bristol. Foxe, who in luck and speed

of movement was a forerunner of the great Parry, examined the coast to the SE. of Port Nelson, then turned north and sailed through Foxe Channel up the inner shore of Baffin Land as far as the Arctic Circle. Thence he returned home before winter set in. James, a brave, amiable gentleman, but, as Foxe reports, "no seaman", after a troubled cruise, was forced to winter on Charlton Island, the scene of Hudson's tragedy. His account of the voyage, possibly over-dramatized, is said to have inspired *The Ancient Mariner* of Coleridge. The joint discoveries of these two men confirmed Button's inference that there was no outlet from the Bay to the south of Port Nelson.

The English adventurers, who had come to explore in the New World with the sole purpose of finding the passage to China, had seen nothing there to suggest the wealth with which the new continent itself was stored. Their search had been slanted to the north; the shores they had approached were, for the most part, barren and forbidding; Hudson alone had met with Indians, and he had quite failed to win their confidence. So, for a generation after the voyage of James, they gave up the north-western enterprise and forgot the bay of Hudson as completely as that of Baffin, until a chance quarrel in New France revived their interest and perhaps altered the history of the entire continent.

In 1608, three years before the marooning of Hudson, the fortress of Quebec had been set up on the lower St. Lawrence by Samuel de Champlain. Other posts were established up the river at Three Rivers and at Montreal, and a thriving business in furs grew up, with the Hurons acting as middlemen between the French settlements and the hunters of the western forests. When, about the middle of the century, these intermediaries were all but exterminated by the sanguinary Iroquois, the French themselves took to the woods and by following the Ottawa valley or devious watercourses to the north, kept the traffic alive and penetrated as far west as Lake Superior. Two enterprising *coureurs des bois*, Grosseillers and Radisson, on their return from an expedition which may have taken them to the vicinity of Hudson Bay, fell out with the governor of New France over the division of the profits, and with the independence of spirit which Frenchman and Englishman alike were quick to learn in the New World, renounced their allegiance and departed first to New

and then to Old England. There they explained to the merchant adventurers of London the possibilities of the fur-trade, and offered their services as agents, pointing out that Hudson Bay furnished more convenient bases than the St. Lawrence for the traffic in skins. The offer was accepted, and the royal approval obtained. In 1670 the Hudson's Bay Company was given its charter, conferring a monopoly of the Canadian trade; and forts set up in James Bay, and later at the mouths of the Nelson and Churchill Rivers, revived the claim to sovereignty which had so nearly been forfeited to France. But as long as the French had an independent footing in the New World it was they and not the English who were the avid Imperialists. The La Vérendryes, following up the lead of Grosseillers and Radisson, established a chain of posts from Lake Superior to Winnipeg, and on to the lower reaches of the Saskatchewan, while their Anglo-Saxon competitors rested supinely on the shores of the Bay, took the trade that came their way, and showed no concern in mapping and occupying the vast ill-defined area which was assigned them by their charter. It is true that two most creditable journeys were made by servants of the Company: Henry Kelsey reached the Prairies (1690-1692) and Anthony Henday the Foothills (1754-1755) in advance of the French; but these men came not as the representatives of their king but as casual travellers; and their records, which would have been most valuable to scholars of their own time, were left to rot in official or private archives until they possessed nothing but an antiquarian interest. Prior to 1770 the contribution of the English traders to geographical knowledge of the interior was negligible.

In the same period one or two attempts were made to extend the map of the continent by sea. The myth of a practicable North West Passage died hard: the careful observations and sober conclusions of William Baffin had less weight with scientific theorists than the fantastic story of the Strait of Anian, and other legendary channels, which (associated with the names of Corte Real, Maldonado, and De Fonte) were believed to lead from Hudson Bay or Davis Strait in a generally south-westerly direction to the gulf which Juan de Fuca had supposedly discovered on the western shore of the continent. This legend, like some others, was not without usefulness: it helped to stimulate the zeal of the



French-Canadian discoverers. For the English it caused nothing but disappointment and disaster.

James Knight was an active and zealous servant of the Hudson's Bay Company who had been instrumental in reorganizing the trading posts after their occupation by the French in Queen Anne's War. During his term as governor at York Factory his attention was drawn by samples of metal brought by Indians to the post, and on questioning them he learned that they came from a copper mine near the shore of the northern ocean. He was also given hints of a yellow metal to be found in that region which may have had a genuine foundation in the mineral deposits of Yukon and Alaska. The Indians cautioned their friend that the mine could not be approached from the sea, but the lure of gold was too strong for the promptings of reason. As soon as his term as governor expired, Knight hastened to London with his report, and procured from the Company two ships with instructions to discover the mythical strait and the minerals to which it gave access. Neither Knight nor any of his men returned from this hasty and ill-advised enterprise. Three years later (in 1722) an officer of the Company, Captain Scroggs, cruising north of the Churchill River, heard a rumour that the members of Knight's expedition had been set upon and murdered by the Eskimos, and actually sighted his two ships, wrecked and cast up on the shore of Marble Island. Stormy weather prevented closer enquiry, and this meagre report was all that was known of the disaster until 1767, when a party of traders, including the young sailor, Samuel Hearne, visited the island and received the Eskimo version of the tragedy.

From this it appeared that in the autumn of 1719 Knight had been forced to seek on Marble Island winter quarters for which he was ill prepared. His crews were dreadfully ravaged by scurvy, and in the ensuing spring were too weak and dispirited to man either ship and make a strenuous bid for safety. Two men only lived into the third summer, and these "frequently went to the top of an adjacent rock, and earnestly looked to the south and the east, as if in expectation of some vessels coming to their relief. After continuing there a considerable time, and nothing coming in sight, they sat down together and wept bitterly." This touch of description, which seems too genuine to have been an

invention, disposes one to accept the truth of the Eskimos' story, and to acquit them of murder; but, at the same time, if Knight's crews were not molested by the natives, it is extraordinary that men, who had strength to live into the third summer, had not the energy during the second season to rally their weaker comrades and get at least one ship under way again. They were separated from York Factory by scarcely as many hundreds of miles as Jens Munck, when in a similar plight, had sailed thousands.

As the eighteenth century advanced the charter of the Company came under attack from persons who charged it with slackness in the work of discovery, and with deliberately concealing the fact of the Strait in order to exclude other commercial enterprise, and to keep the Canadian North a preserve for the fur trade. About 1740 these interests found an influential spokesman in William Dobbs, a member of the Irish Parliament, who prevailed on the Admiralty to send an expedition in 1741 (commanded by one Middleton, an officer of proved skill and integrity), and another in 1747, to prosecute the search for the Strait of Anian. Chesterfield Inlet, Wager and Repulse Bays were examined, and the continental shore was defined up to the base of Melville Peninsula; no Passage was discovered, but, owing to the shortness of the season and to navigational difficulties, its existence was not definitely disproved. Dobbs was not above asserting that Captain Middleton had been bribed to falsify his logbook and bring in a negative report; and, though the stir he had created died away, the problem which had provoked it remained unsolved.

Two decades later the discovery of Knight's fate revived interest in northern exploration, and particularly in the search for the mineral deposits which had lured the old trader to his doom. In 1768 Moses Norton, then in charge of Fort Prince of Wales at Churchill, sailed to England to lay before the Governors of the Company a scheme which promised to solve the tantalizing mystery with less risk and expense than attended enterprises such as that of Knight. He found a ready hearing from his employers in London, for, apart from the gain that might be expected from copper deposits, they remained liable to annoyance

from men like Dobbs, unless they could either discover a navigable Passage or definitely prove its non-existence. They therefore promptly sanctioned Norton's proposal to send overland to the Copper Mine a surveyor, who was to travel without white companions, and throughout the journey of some thousand miles into the wilderness was to rely solely on the guidance and protection of his Indian escort.

Norton recognized that the task demanded gifts above those of the European servant of the Company. The agent whom he selected, besides being of thoroughly trustworthy character, must be able to determine latitude from astronomical observations, and to draw up a report in a clear and convincing manner. His choice fell on Samuel Hearne, a young sailor in the Company's service, who had already volunteered for the task.

Sir John Franklin has described Hearne as "that persevering traveller", and the title is well deserved. He left Churchill on November the 6th, 1769. Two hundred miles out he was deserted by the bulk of his Indian escort and returned to the fort half-starved. His second attempt, from February to November 1770, took him as far as Dubawnt Lake, far up into the Barrens and a third of the way to his destination. There he broke the quadrant on which he relied for his observations; he and his guides were robbed by the northern Indians and struggled back to their base in worse plight than before.

Hearne was a man of peculiar type. The patience with which he submitted to injuries, coupled with his uncomplaining endurance of hardship and privation, and the meek pertinacity which ultimately carried him to his goal, are characteristics which, one would have thought, belonged more to the Oriental than the European. His humiliating failure, and the proof of his inability to control the Indians, had no effect on him but to strengthen his resolution, nor did Governor Norton show any disposition to blame his subordinate or withdraw his confidence. A new escort was organized under the command of a celebrated leader, Matonabee. This man had resided for some years at the Fort, and, while retaining the tastes and habits of the savage, possessed a certain breadth of outlook and sympathy unusual in a barbarian reared in an environment too harsh to afford scope for generous sentiments. His masterful character and the reli-

ance placed on his word had led to his regular employment as intermediary between the Fort and the Indians of the Great Slave Lake area. He had himself been to the Copper Mine, and Hearne's journey was in part the result of the report which he had furnished.

On the third journey, which began on December the 6th, 1770, Matonabee made good his promise that a well-conducted expedition would be free from excessive hardship. He did not make straight for his objective, but, while winter lasted, kept within the forest belt for the sake of the shelter and the game which it afforded. Late in May he swung north and entered the Barren Lands some distance to the east of Slave Lake. Migratory bands of Indians were encountered, and the warriors among these declared their intention of accompanying the travellers to the Polar Sea for no other purpose than to murder the Eskimos whom they expected to find on its shores. Hearne's feeble protests were received with scorn, and when Matonabee, with his accustomed generosity, interceded for the Eskimos, saying that on his visit to the coast they had treated him with kindness, he too was overruled. So it was with a considerable body of Indians that on July the 14th, 1771, Hearne arrived at a lower reach of the Coppermine River, with the assurance that the fabled mine and the Northern Ocean lay not far beyond.

The Indians crossed the river, and descending its left bank, committed a cruel and wanton massacre of a band of Eskimos whom they found encamped just within sight of the sea. The scene of this tragedy is vividly portrayed for us in a sketch made fifty years later by Sir John Franklin's companion, Robert Hood, whose violent death a few months after was to add another note of tragedy to the history of that remote and sombre region. It shows the flat top of a rocky eminence overhanging the rapids to which Hearne gave the appropriate name of the Bloody Falls; and in the middle distance steep cliffs walling in the grassy flats through which the Coppermine makes its way to the sea.

The Indians gave Hearne an escort to the mouth of the river, which, contrary to their report, he found choked with sand-bars and quite unfit for navigation. Seaward the ice lay in an unbroken mass within three-quarters of a mile of the shoreline.

While he was making these notes the weather came on dull; and the lonely figure of the European observing the tide marks in fog and drizzling rain gave a very inadequate setting to an act which marked an epoch in North American geography. Though nearly two centuries had elapsed since the voyages of Martin Frobisher, Hearne was the first white man to view the Arctic between Baffin Land and the east end of Siberia.

The party then re-ascended the left bank of the river to visit the copper deposits. There Hearne was confirmed in his impression that his journey, however beneficial to science, had been of no use to commerce. The mine was "an entire jumble of rocks and gravel", with only an occasional trace of the metal he sought. From that point he began his return journey, which occupied the autumn and winter, bringing him back to Churchill on June the 30th, 1772, after an absence (on his third trip) of almost nineteen months.

The explorer was handsomely rewarded by the Governors of the Company; but the latter were disappointed if they fancied that his journey "had put an end to all disputes concerning a North West Passage through Hudson's Bay" by exploding the legends of De Fuca and De Fonte. Hearne had been a most inexact observer; and manifest discrepancies in his distances out and back, as well as the extravagant height of his latitudes (he had placed the mouth of the Coppermine River four degrees north of its actual location), were seized on by Alexander Dalrymple, geographer to the East India Company, not, it is true, to discredit his discovery but to assign to it a more southerly latitude which still left room for the mythical passage to China. It was the land journeys of Alexander Mackenzie farther west, and the voyages of Cook and Vancouver, which finally extinguished the hopes that from the times of Frobisher and Davis had continued to stir the imagination of the Merchant Adventurers of England.

Though Hearne was the first English traveller by land to publish an extensive account of his wanderings, his achievement has been obscured in the eyes of posterity by the masterful character and the more striking performance of Alexander Mackenzie. The Englishman lacked the narrow, aggressive concentration of his Scottish counterpart; he was less interested in the

specific problem which was the cause of his journey than in the broad aspects of human nature. He had the easy-going tolerance of the eighteenth century, and, though sometimes revolted by the behaviour of his Indian guides, never failed to regard them as rational creatures and his natural equals. What modern sociologist could deal with the practice of polygamy with the calm objectivity expressed in the words: "It is not surprising that a plurality of wives is customary among these people, as it is so well adapted to their situation and manner of life. In my opinion no race of people under the sun have a greater occasion for such an indulgence. . . . Every good hunter is under the necessity of having several persons to assist in carrying his furs to the Company's fort, as well as carrying back the European goods which he receives in exchange for them. No persons in this country are so proper for this work as the women". Or where could one find a better description of some process in medicine or surgery than the following: "For some inward complaints such as griping in the intestines, difficulty in making water, &c., it is very common to see those jugglers blowing into the *anus*, or into parts adjacent, till their eyes are almost starting out of their heads: and this operation is performed indifferently on all, without regard to age or sex. The accumulation of so large a quantity of wind is at times apt to occasion some extraordinary emotions, which are not easily suppressed by a sick person; and as there is no vent for it but by the channel through which it was conveyed thither, it sometimes causes an odd scene between the doctor and his patient." It is quaint observations such as these, and notes on animal habits, not without interest even today, which entitle Hearne's *Journal*, despite its poverty of incident, to rank with the diaries of Prickett, Franklin, and McClintock as one of the classics of polar discovery.

The *Journal* had a long and troubled history before it appeared in print. In 1775 Hearne succeeded Norton as local governor at Churchill. In August 1782 he was compelled to surrender the fort to the noted French sea fighter and geographer, La Perouse, and was carried a prisoner to France. With him went his journal, which La Perouse had seized as lawful spoil, until, yielding to Hearne's entreaties, he restored it on the express condition of its early publication. "*Jamais*," says Hearne's French translator,

*“vainqueur n'exerca plus utilement son droit de conquete et n'imposa au vaincu une condition plus honorable,”* and it is a matter for regret that, owing to Hearne's slackness, when the generous Frenchman embarked on his last fatal voyage to “the islands of the Southern Sea”, the promise was still unredeemed. The *Journal* was finally brought out in book form by John Douglas, Bishop of Salisbury, two years after its author's death.

Samuel Hearne was the first of the British traders to publish an extensive account of the interior of northern Canada, but after his journey the pace of exploration was vastly accelerated. The St. Lawrence valley had become a British possession in 1763, and the Scottish merchants of Montreal who had fallen heirs to the machinery of the fur-trade, set up by the La Vérendryes, proceeded to exploit it with no less energy than they, and with vastly improved resources and organization. The line of communication which the French had carried to the lower Saskatchewan River was extended to the Chipewyan and Great Slave Lakes; and in 1789 Alexander Mackenzie descended the Mackenzie River to the tide-waters of the Arctic, so providing confirmation, if any was needed, of the substantial truth of Hearne's narrative. Thereafter the Montreal traders turned their attention to the discovery and exploitation of the richer Pacific coast region; but their far northern posts, and those of their Hudson's Bay Company competitors, remained to furnish advanced bases for the naval explorers of the early nineteenth century.

In the last quarter of the eighteenth century, when the fur-traders were approaching the Canadian Arctic from the south, sea-going explorers were doing the same from the west. The work of discovery in the North Pacific had lagged: the tidal wave of Spanish expansion had spent its force in Central and South America, sending only the merest ripple into the great North American triangle. On land the invaders came to a standstill in Lower California; by sea the Greek pilot, Apostolos Valerianos, better known as Juan de Fuca, claimed to have discovered a vast gulf in the continental shoreline about latitude 49° N., but his Spanish employers took so little interest in his voyage (made supposedly about 1590) that no authentic record of it has been

preserved. De Fuca's gulf, if it existed, might well be the western outlet of the Strait of Anian; and the Spaniards had no mind to pursue a discovery in which the traders of England and Holland had more interest than themselves. So California remained the frontier of civilization until in the early eighteenth century the impulse to fresh discovery arose from a most unexpected source, the semi-barbarous empire of Muscovy.

In 1580, about the time that John Davis was seeking a way to the Pacific from the east, the Russians in Europe began their march to the same objective from the opposite direction. They overran the thinly populated regions of northern Asia with extraordinary rapidity, and in 1638 reached the Pacific coast at Okhotsk, near latitude 60° N., and about a thousand miles north of the island empire of Japan. There for a time their advance halted. Exploration by land to the north-east was hindered by a forbidding climate and difficult terrain; search by water seemed out of the question as long as the little settlement of Okhotsk lacked the materials and the facilities for the construction of ocean-going vessels.

Though Okhotsk remained for a long time the high-water mark of well-attested discovery, the Cossacks continued to busy themselves exploring the Lena River and the adjoining Arctic coast. One of their number, Simon Deshnef, who reported sailing round a cape somewhere to the east of the River Kolyma in 1648, has actually been credited with circumnavigating the East Cape and passing from the Arctic to the Pacific Ocean eighty years in advance of Vitus Bering. There seems to be no doubt that this early pioneer did make his way from the mouth of the Kolyma to the Gulf of Anadyr on the Bering Sea, but did he do so on salt water or overland, by way, perhaps, of the Little Anyui and Anadyr valleys? The roundabout ocean voyage—many hundreds of miles in flat-bottomed river-boats—sounds a most improbable achievement; on the other hand the Russians, as Bering was later to prove, are capable of an almost incredible degree of endurance and patient daring. An argument against assigning the discovery of Bering Strait to Deshnef is that, as far as the writer knows, the claim on his behalf was not advanced until Bering (who knew nothing of his alleged voyage) and Cook had proved conclusively that Bering Strait existed. The safest verdict



is "not proven". Modern Soviet geographers, however, are untroubled by any doubts, and have renamed East Cape, Deshnef, in honour of its supposed discoverer. Whatever his precise achievement, the stout old Cossack was a notable traveller; but the name East Cape is so peculiarly appropriate to the tapering end of the Eurasian land mass that one wishes that it had been preserved, and some other means found of giving Deshnef the recognition which he so well deserves.

Finally, in 1724, the emperor Peter the Great entrusted to the Danish-born Vitus Bering the Napoleonic commission of taking a force of naval and other personnel overland from European Russia to the Pacific, where he was to build ships and trace the Siberian coast until he reached the easternmost extremity of Asia, or proved it continuous with the land mass of America.

Though Bering received scant justice in his lifetime and has hardly been treated by posterity with the honour that is his due, for sheer magnitude of effort he stands in the front rank of discoverers. Carrying with him materials such as ironwork, canvas, cables, and rigging, and travelling, according to circumstance, by river barge, pack-horse, or sledge, he conducted a party of some hundreds of men from St. Petersburg east, through the vast and unending Siberian wastes, to Okhotsk, and thence to the peninsula of Kamchatka—a third of the way around the globe. There he built and embarked in the sixty-foot-long *Gabriel*, and directed his course up the coast of Siberia. On August the 14th, 1728, he passed the East Cape and, sighting no land to the north as high as latitude  $67^{\circ} 11' N.$ , he turned back, considering that his mission was fulfilled. Owing to the poor visibility common in those waters he had not sighted the American shore which, for aught he knew, was hundreds of miles away.

On his return to St. Petersburg the explorer was well received by the Russian government, but finding his report discredited by various *savants* whose preconceived theories clashed with his own personal observations, he asked and received permission to make the laborious journey back to Kamchatka in order to extend his discoveries. In 1741 he sailed from Petropavlovsk with his own ship, the *St. Peter*, and the *St. Paul* and this time headed straight east. The *St. Paul* (Lieutenant Chirikof) parted from her consort in a gale, and on July the 16th made the first authentic

landfall on the American coast north of California. After a short survey, Chirikof made the two-thousand-mile voyage back to Petropavlovsk in safety. Bering was not so lucky. He too reached the American continent in the vicinity of Mount St. Elias, Alaska, but on the way back lost his bearings in the fog and became entangled in the dangerous maze of the Aleutian Islands. After losing much time he was obliged to put his men ashore on an islet near Kamchatka, where he died of scurvy on the sand floor of a miserable tent. Truly from Ferdinand Magellan to Scott of the Antarctic the explorer has been the most deserving and the worst rewarded of the benefactors of humanity! Those of Bering's crew who lived through the winter, finding themselves too weak to work the ship, constructed a boat from its timbers and reached the mainland alive. It was this voyage of Chirikof and Bering which first established Russia's claim to the Alaskan panhandle.

Though Bering's character as a geographer was not fully recognized until his findings were confirmed by Captain Cook, his voyages had an immediate effect in the Russian seal fisheries which grew up along the shores he had discovered. Thereupon the Spaniards, fearing that they might lose by default their claims in the Pacific, sent up one or two ill-equipped expeditions, which determined the general trend of the coast without any accurate or detailed survey. This in turn provoked the British Government to send Captain James Cook, already world-famous for his discoveries in Australasia and Antarctica, to the Pacific with orders to attempt the North West Passage in reverse by way of Bering Strait. After making his landfall on the coast of California, Cook was obliged by foul weather to keep a wide offing until on Vancouver Island he made the historically important discovery of Nootka Sound. Thence he proceeded north, worked his way around the Alaskan shore through Bering Strait, and had climbed right over the shoulder of the continent when he was stopped by continuous pack-ice off Icy Cape in 1778. For half a century this point was the high-water mark of polar discovery in that region: for Cook was murdered in the ensuing January at the Sandwich Islands whither he had gone to winter; and succeeding expeditions, notably that of his former lieutenant, George Vancouver, concentrated on the exact charting of

the British Columbian and Alaskan coasts of sub-Arctic latitudes. The spirit of scientific discovery was fully aroused in the nations of Europe, and the North West Passage, discredited as a channel of trade, had become a geographical problem of absorbing interest; but the French Revolution and the wars of Napoleon intervened, leaving no space for enterprises which promised neither commercial nor military advantage. When peace was finally restored in 1815, the map of Canada's Arctic coast and the islands beyond remained an utter blank from the eastern shore of Baffin Land to Icy Cape, with the exception of the two river-mouths where Hearne and Mackenzie had barely reached tide-water.

A glance at the map will show how well the genius of the North West Passage had guarded its secret. The eastern approach by which the final attack was to come was covered by the sprawling bulk of Baffin Island, which compelled the navigator to ascend to Lancaster Sound in  $74^{\circ}$  of latitude before steering west for Bering Strait. After penetrating Lancaster Sound the explorer might, in a favourable season, pass through Barrow Strait and Melville Sound to Melville Island, but only to find his further progress blocked by the mass of the "Polar Pack", which was forced by wind and current from the Beaufort Sea into and through McClure Strait. Parry was to test this obstacle from the east and decide that it was impenetrable; when McClure pushed into it from the west, he barely escaped with his life. No sailing ship ever conquered this "ice-stream", which was first crossed in 1944 by the R.C.M.P. schooner *St. Roch*.

The commander who took the first opportunity of escaping to the south from Lancaster Sound by entering Regent's Inlet would, unless he detected the narrow and inconspicuous Bellot Strait, find himself in the *impasse* formed by Boothia Isthmus and the Canadian mainland. The only thoroughfare (in terms of sailing ships) lies not there, but to the west of North Somerset Island, by way of Peel Sound and the channel named Franklin after the explorer who, in 1846, was lured along it to his destruction. For if the navigator, on emerging from the southern exit of Franklin Strait, chooses the obvious course and passes to the right of Cape Felix, he is again caught in the "Polar Pack", which, thrusting an icy tongue through the straits of McClure and

McClintock, piles up its frozen masses on the north-west shore of King William Island. The true Passage lies to the left of Cape Felix, through Ross and Rae Straits, for, once in Simpson Strait, the navigator can hope for reasonable plain sailing along the continental shore to Alaska. The key, then, to the navigable North West Passage lay in the well-concealed waters which separated King William Island from the Boothia Peninsula; and by a curious fatality three men were in this vicinity prior to the Franklin disaster without making the discovery which would have averted it. In 1830 James Ross twice crossed the northern arm of this channel in a visibility much reduced by fog; in 1834 Back descended the Fish River by boat, and spent three weeks in vain endeavours to make his way through the ice to the west, when open water and an important discovery were beckoning him to the north; and in 1839 Thomas Simpson, viewing the south end of Rae Strait in poor visibility, failed to correct the report of Ross that King William Island was connected by land with Boothia.

In warmer waters the intricacies of navigation would soon have yielded to the sustained efforts of the surveyor, but the Arctic geography found in the climate an ally which made it well-nigh invincible. The sea was navigable for scarcely two months out of the twelve, and even in that restricted period a ship's efficiency was much reduced by drifting ice which might, especially in a narrow channel, form a congested mass to block further progress. The fair wind, which carried her forward, swept the pack with her in increasing density; the wind which drove the ice clear of her might be dead opposed to the course she was setting. In a heavy pack she was liable to be hemmed in immovably, "beset", and cases occurred when a ship drifted for miles, not afloat but propped up at a crazy angle by the ice which enclosed her. As the action of the tide tended to keep the shoreline clear of ice, progress was often made by keeping between the edge of the floe and the beach, and weaving in and around bays and promontories, a hazardous method, for when the "floe advanced" (an ominous phrase, which often occurs in Cook's journal), the ship's scope for evasion was much curtailed, and she was liable to be pushed aground, if not rolled clean over. The 300- or 400-ton vessels of Parry and Franklin had the advantage

of carrying supplies for several years; but they proved much less handy in ice navigation than the fifty-ton "cock-boats" in which Davis and Hudson had braved the northern seas.

The dangers and uncertainties of this navigation were increased by the variability of the seasons. Apparently the first man to penetrate the Canadian archipelago was also the luckiest in the weather he encountered there: the records of his successors are filled with complaints that weather and ice conditions were not what Parry's journal would have led one to expect. The winter harbour was thus a very treacherous ally; a ship once frozen in within its protecting capes might be kept prisoner for the whole of the ensuing year if temperatures were below par or if no summer gale came from the right quarter to drive out the rotten ice; she might remain ice-bound for years until her starving, scurvy-ridden crew were forced to attempt their escape by boat or by sledge. If not the worst, this was the most trying of the anxieties which beset the Arctic explorer; under no other condition was he so helpless and devoid of resource.

Such were the dangers which the British seaman was called upon to face, when, in 1818, the Admiralty, resuming the work of scientific exploration suspended during the wars of Napoleon, sent two expeditions to the northern seas. Captain John Ross, with Lieutenant Parry as his second-in-command, was directed to re-survey Baffin Bay and seek an ocean passage to the west. Captain Buchan, in the *Dorothea*, accompanied by Lieutenant Franklin in the *Trent*, was ordered to sail to the North Pole, and thence, if possible, to Bering Strait. (It is only fair to the Admiralty to observe that it found no fault with Buchan for his failure to carry out either clause of these instructions.) Buchan almost stove in his ship in the Spitzbergen ice, and returned under the protecting escort of Franklin. Ross came back also having made a useful survey of Baffin Bay, but one marred by the error of "closing" the sounds of Jones and Lancaster (i.e. declaring them to be bays only, not through channels). He suffered much ridicule and abuse when his mistake became known, quite undeservedly, for, as experience was to prove, nothing was easier than to mistake masses of ice which had been heaved up by pressure for land, especially in the refracted atmosphere common in the Arctic. Baffin had made the same mistake.

Ross later insisted that Parry must have concurred with him in closing Lancaster Sound, because otherwise it would have been his duty, being "associated in the command", to have expressed his dissent from the senior officer's judgement. Certainly if Parry had been acquainted with any relevant *fact* that was unknown to his chief, it would have been his duty to impart it; but when it was a matter of opinion only, one can understand why that prudent and courteous young officer shrank from telling his self-opinionated superior (who was also a rabid total abstainer) that he had seen a range of mountains where no mountains existed. . . . The mistake was easily made; and the veteran polar explorer learned to treat it with indulgence; in 1858 when McClintock tried to pass to the south of Levesque Island and found that it was no island but the northernmost point of Boothia Peninsula, the gallant Irishman was quite unruffled: he merely altered his course, and recorded in his journal the determination to name the first new geographical feature he met with "Levesque" to compensate the gentleman whom he had robbed of his island.

Though too loyal openly to disparage his chief, Parry must have privately notified the Admiralty of his dissent from Ross's opinion, for he was promptly appointed to conduct another expedition to Lancaster Sound, and thence to seek a passage westward to Bering Strait. To supplement the efforts of Parry, the Admiralty adopted the novel and hazardous scheme of sending a small party overland to the mouth of the Coppermine River in order to correct the "defective geography" of Samuel Hearne and to survey the coast eastward to Hudson Bay by *canoe*. This mission was entrusted to the late commander of the *Trent*, Lieutenant John Franklin. The last phase of the struggle for the North West Passage had begun.



## Franklin's First Journey to the Polar Sea, 1819–1822

AT the time of his appointment to his first independent command John Franklin was nearly thirty-three years of age. He had a record of eighteen years' service in the navy, and had participated in the battles of Copenhagen, Trafalgar, and New Orleans. The fourth and last of a distinguished line of marine surveyors, he had learned his trade from the Australian discoverer, Matthew Flinders, himself a pupil of Bligh of the *Bounty*, who had been sailing master to James Cook. It was to Bligh's former patron, the aged scientist Sir Joseph Banks, that Franklin was indebted, first for the command of the *Trent*, and now for charge of the projected overland journey.

Franklin's orders were to explore the coast of North America east from the Coppermine, and, if possible, to join hands with Parry and link his discoveries by land with those of the latter by sea. He was also to make and record observations relating to winds, currents, tides, and the magnetic dip and variation. Associated with him for these purposes were Dr. John Richardson, R.N., and Messrs. George Back and Robert Hood, Admiralty midshipmen (i.e. qualified lieutenants who had not yet received their promotion), both gifted landscape artists, who were to make sketches in addition to assisting their commander with the more routine duties of discovery.

If quality and not numbers was to be taken into account, Franklin had no reason to complain of this staff. Richardson was a Lowland Scot, whose father had been Provost of Dumfries and friend of Robert Burns. When a boy his gifts had attracted the

notice of the poet, who is said to have wondered whether his own son or young Richardson would become the greater man. He had devoted the intervals of his service as a naval surgeon to the study of botany and mineralogy; and in later life was to be the teacher of Thomas Huxley, who declared that "he owed whatever he had to show in the way of scientific work or repute to the start in life given him by Richardson".

It was young Hood's destiny to leave behind him no memorial except a few sketches, the first and among the best of the Canadian northland, but marked by a tender melancholy which distinguishes them from the robust and vigorous drawings of Back. If the silhouette of him which survives is an index of his physique, his was not the stuff of which pioneers are made; the effeminate delicacy of his outline is in utter contrast with the massive, irregular profile of Franklin.

By far the most interesting and self-revealing member of the party was its senior midshipman. It is a thousand pities that Sir George Back published those of his journals which related only to the expeditions which he himself was appointed to command: one would give a good deal for the honest sailor's own account of all that befell him from 1808, when he joined the frigate *Arethusa*, to that wild and stormy night twenty-nine years later, when he ran his sinking ship aground in Lough Swilly harbour with his frame exhausted and his journeying done. His career was packed with adventure; at the age of twelve he was repeatedly under fire; at thirteen he was a prisoner of war, carried across the Pyrenees in a mule-pannier, and deposited in the fortress of Verdun. There, instead of giving himself up to moping discontent, the young Odysseus applied himself to the study of drawing and mathematics; he took a walking tour through France, whether on parole or as an escaped prisoner our source does not state—he was soon again at sea, and saw his ship dismasted in a hurricane. He later reappeared on board the *Trent*, and it was with a memory packed with "moving incidents in flood and field" that in January 1819 the young sailor signified to his superiors his readiness to accompany Lieutenant Franklin on the journey to the Polar Sea.

With plenty of courage, Back had neither the seriousness of disposition nor the intensity of purpose which are indispensable



to the great captain. His virtues were of a different order. No other man has viewed the scenery of the Canadian North with so appreciative an eye, nor has been able to give such full and vigorous expression to that appreciation in prose. Some of Back's descriptive passages (those on Portage La Loche and the fire-scarred landscape at Artillery Lake notably) will bear comparison with the paintings of Tom Thomson for truth and richness of colouring. He was also gifted with an affability which the kindly but self-conscious Franklin lacked, and could chat with the *voyageurs*, and murder the native dialects with every chance comer, so winning the affection of Indian and Eskimo, and enriching his pages with a human interest which many excellent books of travel do not possess. Perhaps he acquired his *bonhomie* during his stay in Revolutionary France. Certainly his capacity for tipling with the Indians while feeling a genuine interest in their eternal salvation reveals a catholicity of outlook of which few Englishmen in the immediate post-Wesley era were capable.

Before embarking with his companions Franklin paid a visit to the explorer Sir Alexander Mackenzie, and interviewed officials of the Hudson's Bay and North West Companies, from whom he received assurances that they would write to their agents in Rupert's Land directing all possible aid to be given the expedition.

On May the 23rd, 1819, the four adventurers sailed from Gravesend in the Hudson's Bay ship *Prince of Wales*, accompanied by the *Eddystone* and the *Wear*. The convoy touched at Stromness in the Orkneys, where Franklin secured the services of a number of boatmen to accompany the expedition as far as Fort Chipewyan, at which point *voyageurs* and Indians were to take over. He was amused at the rigour with which these men questioned him about the terms and conditions of the service before they would consent to sign a contract: "Such caution on the part of the Northern mariners forms a singular contrast to the ready and thoughtless manner in which our English seaman enters upon any enterprise, however arduous, without enquiring or desiring to know where he is going or what he is going about." From one of these men Franklin was to learn that the caution

which a Scot displays in embarking on an enterprise is sometimes matched by the courage and tenacity which he brings to its execution.

The voyage was uneventful until the convoy reached Hudson Strait, where the adventurers were given a foretaste of the dangers they might expect to encounter in the Polar Sea. When becalmed off Resolution Island, and quite unmanageable owing to lack of steering way, the three ships were being swept away by the current, "when we had the alarming view of a barren and rugged shore within a few yards, towering above the mastsheads". The crew of the *Prince of Wales* tried to fend her off with poles, but she struck, was swung clear by the current, struck again, and again. The rudder, displaced by the first shock, was jarred back into place by the second, and the ship, taking advantage of a breeze that had sprung up, was working clear when she crashed into a grounded berg and only by a miracle, says Franklin, did she recover deep water with her masts standing.

At this moment the fog began to lift and revealed the *Eddy-stone* at a little distance to seaward, undamaged, for her boats had taken her in tow and kept her offshore. Having now a working wind, she came down and took her damaged consort in tow, freeing the crew of the latter for work with pump and bucket, while the carpenters of both ships laboured to check the inrush of water. A sail drawn over the leaks was being forced through the ship's side into the hold until substances were attached to it which caught in the shattered timbers and partially arrested the flow of water. The pump crews thus gained the upper hand and enabled the carpenters to effect substantial repairs and get the ship to York Factory without further mishap.

The moment Franklin landed he was confronted with difficulties which the friendly assurances of the fur companies had not led him to expect. Mr. Williams, governor of the Hudson's Bay posts, received him most kindly, but informed him that, owing to the conditions created by strenuous competition with the North West Company, a boat and a steersman were all the help he could furnish. The explorers therefore left behind the bulk of their supplies, to be forwarded when possible by the traders, and began the ascent to Lake Winnipeg by way of the Hayes River—a form of navigation as unfamiliar to them as it

was to the Stromness boatmen. They were often obliged to convert themselves into barge-horses, lay hold of tow-rope, and painfully "track" the boat upstream. Passing crews of fur-traders, with one or two exceptions which Franklin gratefully acknowledges, left the greenhorns to learn the hard way and cope unassisted with rocks and rapids. Proceeding thus, they passed the north end of Lake Winnipeg, began the ascent of the Saskatchewan, and on October the 22nd reached Fort Cumberland, where they were invited to spend the winter. Franklin, however, determined to push ahead to Lake Athabasca in order to speed up preparations and obtain a first-hand knowledge of the Barren Lands he was to traverse. Escort was provided by a party of dog sledges, which was travelling to Ile à la Crosse, and on January the 18th he set out, taking with him the seaman, John Hepburn, to whom he had already become attached and Back. Richardson, Hood, and the boatmen were to bring up supplies by canoe in the spring.

The party directed its course up the frozen bed of the North Saskatchewan, following the sledges on snowshoes. Thirteen days brought them up the river, past the present towns of Nipawin and Prince Albert to Fort Carlton, whence, after a week's rest, they quitted the river, struck north across the bald prairie between the modern town of Leask and the Laird Ferry, and reached Green Lake on February the 16th. Proceeding from there in company with A. R. McLeod of the North West Company, they passed Ile à la Crosse, and entered the Athabasca region by the beautiful Portage la Loche (Methy Portage) and the Clearwater River. On March the 26th they reached Fort Chipewyan, having travelled 857 miles in the depth of winter.

The next few months were occupied in negotiations with the mutually hostile officers of the two fur companies. Arrangements were finally concluded: canoes and some supplies were furnished; *voyageurs* and Indian interpreters were provided to accompany the expedition down the Coppermine and along the Arctic coast; the services of Indian hunters were secured; and, Franklin was informed, two Eskimo interpreters were on their way from Hudson Bay.

On July the 13th Richardson, Hood, and the boatmen arrived by canoe from Cumberland House. The traders who escorted

them had consumed a large part of the provisions intended for the expedition, which in consequence left Chipewyan very ill-supplied.

Having now obtained the promised *voyageurs*, Franklin gave homeward transportation to all his Scottish boatmen except Hepburn, and discharged them. He proceeded to Moose Deer Island and crossed Great Slave Lake to the North West post of (Old) Fort Providence, where he met Akaitcho, the Copper Indian chief on whose followers he was to rely for game during the winter and the ensuing summer. Had he not been disappointed in his plans he would have preferred to make his way by the Mackenzie and Great Bear Rivers to the east end of Great Bear Lake and spend the winter at that point, within easy reach of the Arctic coast. But the non-arrival of a large part of his supplies, especially ammunition for his Indian hunters, and tobacco, a trading commodity which they greatly prized, forced him to remain in touch with the base of Fort Providence. He therefore determined to ascend the Yellowknife River and set up quarters in the highlands which separated its watershed from that of the Coppermine. On August the 3rd he left Providence with a party consisting of his three naval assistants, Frederick Wentzel, clerk to the North West Company, Hepburn, British seaman, seventeen *voyageurs* of French and Indian extraction, and three interpreters, along with Akaitcho and his hunters, and journeyed to Winter Lake, the proposed site of his winter camp, about thirty miles from the source of the Yellowknife and just south of the height of land beyond which lay the Coppermine. The Indians immediately dispersed in search of "reindeer" (caribou), while the *voyageurs* began the construction of a group of buildings to which was given the name of Fort Enterprise. Back and Hood, sent ahead to confirm or correct the report of Samuel Hearne, brought back word that an overland journey of fifty miles would conduct the expedition to a point where the Coppermine was navigable for canoes.

With the coming of winter Back was directed to return to Providence to arrange for the forwarding of the supplies expected from Cumberland House, and in addition to cross Slave Lake to Moose Deer Fort to borrow from the traders whatever he could in the way of tobacco, ammunition, blankets, and iron-

ware. Game proved scarce on the journey, and Back praises the generosity of his Indian guides who pressed their own scanty ration on himself and Wentzel, saying "we are accustomed to starvation". At Providence he found dispatches for Franklin, and describes graphically the means he took to ensure their speedy delivery. "As the Indians and their wives complained of illness and inability to return before they had rested, a flagon of mixed spirits was given them, and their sorrows were soon forgotten, and in a quarter of an hour they proclaimed themselves excellent hunters, and capable of going anywhere; however their boasting ceased with the last drop of the bottle, when a crying scene took place, which would have continued half the night, had not the magic of an additional quantity of spirits dried their tears, and," says Back, with a happy adaptation of the words of Holy Writ, "turned their mourning into joy. It was a satisfaction to me to behold these poor creatures enjoying themselves, for they had behaved in the most exemplary and active manner towards the party, and with a generosity and sympathy seldom found in the more civilized parts of the world, and the attention which they manifested towards their wives evinced a benevolence of disposition and goodness of nature which could not fail to secure the approbation of the most indifferent observer." Back was naturally inclined to be pleased with everyone, but this effusive praise of the domestic life of the "Red Man" suggests that he had, very properly, tested the quality of his brand before venturing to set it before strangers, and had written up his journal before its cheering influence had evaporated.

At Providence, Back learned that a quantity of ammunition and tobacco belonging to the expedition had been left on a beach somewhere between Cumberland and Chipewyan owing to the quarrel between the fur companies whose carriers could not agree on the division of the freight consigned to Franklin. The Hudson's Bay official, charged with the supplies, had been overtaken by an unladen North West boat, and on the refusal of the latter to take over its share of the burden had deposited on the river bank half the cargo, consisting of the "most essential requisites", while he carried safe to its destination a large consignment of liquor, "adulterated by the *voyageurs*", Mr. Back was careful to note. That young officer therefore went on to

Chipewyan, hoping to make up some of his deficiencies from the stores there.

While the guest of the North West Company at this post Back opened communication with the factor in charge of the neighbouring Hudson's Bay station of Fort Wedderburn, a less colourful but far more significant figure than himself in the growth of the Canadian West. This was the young George Simpson, who had already given such proof of ability as to have been given charge of the Company's Athabasca posts, where the competition with the Montreal merchants was the fiercest. Between these two men an amusing and sometimes heated correspondence arose. Back, like others of his type on their first arrival at the frontier, reserved all his tact for dealings with the aboriginal population, and treated European civilians as agents whose duty it was to fill all requisitions in exchange for a formal receipt. His training as a naval officer under urgent wartime conditions had disabled him for bargaining and compromise. But Simpson was not the man to be overawed by the King's commission, and being determined not to assist the expedition at the expense of his own commercial operations, would not admit that he had the means of doing so. Back's hosts of the North West Company seem to have taken a malicious pleasure in persuading him that he was being imposed on. He writes to Simpson mentioning arrivals at Fort Wedderburn and "presumes that they brought supplies". Simpson replies with the cold and biting snub: "The arrivals you allude to have no connection with the Goods expected from Isle à la Crosse and your conjecture that they were not empty is perfectly just, but I presume you will give me leave to know the purpose for which they were intended"; and continues with unperturbed civility to note in his journal from day to day. "Mr. Back favoured me with a visit this afternoon"; "Mr. Back did me the honour of dining with me to-day", until Mr. Back, having by one means or another satisfied a portion of his requirements, took his departure with his Indian escort and returned by way of Moose Deer Fort and Slave Lake to Enterprise.

Franklin had passed a difficult and anxious winter at his outpost. There had arisen between him and the European traders the sort of misunderstanding which commonly develops between the newcomer and the veteran frontiersman. The Company

officers were offended at the authoritative manner of the explorers, despised their awkwardness and ineptitude (which they wrongly interpreted as stupidity and grounded incompetence), and freely predicted the failure of the expedition. Simpson confided to his journal the opinion that Captain Franklin could not do without afternoon tea and was unable to walk ten miles in a day. Mr. Weeks, the North West Company factor at Providence, was sowing distrust among the Indians by spreading the report that Franklin and his officers were mere impostors, who sought to live off them and could not pay the promised wages. The non-arrival of the expedition's supplies lent colour to this ungenerous slander, and though Akaitcho, a good judge of men with something of the largeness of character which had marked Hearne's friend Matonabbee, trusted the explorers, the confidence of his tribe was shaken, and these incidents may have contributed to the slackness in hunting during the following summer which was so nearly fatal to those members of the expedition who survived the dreadful march across the Barren Lands. There were disloyal murmurings also among the *voyageurs*, for, though attracted by the generous government pay, they regarded the voyage into the unknown with increasing uneasiness as the time of departure drew nearer. Franklin was painfully aware that the men on whom he was forced to depend would do anything to thwart his purpose short of forfeiting their pay by an act of open mutiny. His situation was similar to that of Henry Hudson on his last voyage, and a judicious observer would not have hesitated to predict that if his resolution so far prevailed over the passive resistance of the *voyageurs* as to carry them deep into the wilderness, the climax would be a breakdown of morale and discipline.

On June the 14th, 1821, the entire party, the white men and their Indian allies, set out from Fort Enterprise. The plan was that Wentzel and the Indians should accompany the main party to the mouth of the Coppermine, and, while the officers and *voyageurs* were surveying the coast to the east, should re-ascend the river, laying caches of meat for the use of the main party (should it return by that route) and a further reserve at Enterprise. Governor Williams at York Factory had been requested to send a schooner to Wager Bay to pick up the party should it

reach its extreme objective, the northern waters of Hudson Bay. The third alternative of a return on foot over the Barren Lands could not be provided for, as its route was quite unpredictable.

After a tedious and difficult journey over rock, through scrub, and over decaying and treacherous ice, the party, with its canoes and supplies, made its way over the height of land and reached the Coppermine on July the 2nd. In a little more than two weeks the river was descended to a rapids which was conjectured to be the Bloody Falls. The truth of Hearne's narrative was confirmed by the spectacle near the falls of a number of skeletons which bore the marks of violence, and from a lofty hill a view was obtained of the ocean they had come so far to seek, "choked with ice and full of islands".

Franklin now released Wentzel and the Indian hunters, charging them to leave caches of meat along the Coppermine, and ordering Wentzel to make sure that Akaitcho and his followers left a supply at Enterprise. The Indian interpreters, Adam and St. Germain, wished to go back with the rest, but their leader held them to their contract, a lucky circumstance, for it was upon the exertions of St. Germain that his own life was to depend.

The main party manned two large canoes and descended the nine miles which separated the Bloody Falls from the sea. The *voyageurs* showed some uneasiness at the sight of the ocean swell, but "the manner in which our faithful Hepburn viewed the element that he had so long been accustomed to contributed not a little to make them ashamed of their fears". To make amends to the explorer of whose honesty he had entertained some doubts, Franklin named the most prominent cape in sight Hearne, "as a just tribute to the memory of that persevering traveller". It was July the 19th and they were exactly five weeks out of Fort Enterprise.

On the 20th the canoes were unable to proceed owing to a strong gale. From this date commences the leader's anxious calculation of the provisions in store which continued as long as he had any provisions to calculate.

On July the 21st a run of thirty-seven miles was made to the east along a coast well covered with vegetation and easy of approach. The islands to the seaward were rocky and barren, presenting high cliffs of a columnar structure. From the presence of



driftwood, which could only come from the west, Franklin inferred the existence of a current and the continuity of the ocean passage in that direction. On the following day the coast appeared less hospitable, and the glare of ice to seaward warned the adventurous little band that it was not to be spared the hazards peculiar to the Polar Sea. On the 25th fog added to its difficulties: it was impossible in crossing small bays, whose inner recesses were hidden from view, to feel sure that they were not leaving the mainland and straying out among the islands. As they rounded Cape Barrow the fog lifted and revealed heavy ice close in upon them. "The shore near us was so steep and rugged that no landing of cargo could be effected, and we were preserved only by some men leaping on the rocks, and thrusting off the ice with poles." With great difficulty, and in continual danger of being crushed, the two canoes fought their way along the eastern side of Cape Barrow, and late at night found a safe berth behind what their leader ruefully named Detention Island.

The achievement of the first five days of actual sailing had been excellent, but the luck of the expedition had run out. Dawn on the 26th revealed that it was hemmed in by ice on a rugged and precipitous coast. The day was passed in idleness, the men grumbling, the officers gloomily observing the fair wind that was blowing beyond the cape, and their own diminishing stock of provisions. On the 27th they made a portage of a mile and a half across a point, not with any hope of deliverance, but to hinder the men from discussing the danger of their situation. On the 30th the ice relaxed somewhat, and the canoes were poled and paddled into more open water. Franklin was now on the western shore of what he later named Bathurst Inlet, from the intricacies of which he was destined never to make his exit by sea. Though observation from the hilltops disclosed a continuous coastline across the gulf, and though he was desirous of making all the easting he could, he dared not cross the inlet until he was sure that it was an inlet and not the ocean lane he sought. Sailing south, therefore, he charted Arctic Sound, named the river which emptied into it after his young friend Hood, went deeper into Bathurst Inlet, and on August the 5th made the discovery that he had spent several days burrowing into the recesses of a narrow bay which his orders, to determine the general trend of the coast,

would have permitted him to by-pass. At the bottom of the inlet a large catch of fish silenced the murmurs of the men; and the canoes, turning north along the eastern side of the bay, entered Melville Sound, where they spent several days seeking for an outlet which did not exist. And here Franklin was obliged to put an end to his search: he had been disappointed in his hope of meeting Eskimos with whom he might pass the winter; northerly winds betokened the end of summer; the canoes were shaken and battered; the men sullen and mutinous. The expedition coasted west along the north shore of Melville Sound and encamped near its mouth at Point Turnagain. From there Franklin, Richardson, and Back examined another twelve miles of coast on foot, and ascertained that its trend again became easterly. They had reached a point only six and a half degrees east of the Coppermine, but in tracing the indentations of the coast had travelled 550 geographical miles, a distance sufficient, Franklin gloomily remarks, to have taken them to Wager Bay. In his despondency he undervalued both the magnitude of his achievement and its importance to geography: he had charted a considerable part of the continental coast in the very heart of the unknown, had established the probability of a North West Passage about the latitude of the Mackenzie, and, by navigating the rockbound shore of an icy sea in frail and heavily-laden canoes, he had performed "one of the most daring and hazardous exploits that has ever been accomplished in the interest of geographical science". Furthermore, in his bold but costly venture he had acquired experience which permitted future amphibian explorations in those regions to be conducted with comparative ease and safety.

It had been Franklin's intention, failing to reach Hudson Bay, to return as he had come by way of the ocean lane and the Coppermine River. But extreme shortage of rations and the alarming scarcity of game, as well as the threatening aspect of the weather, made retreat by a shorter route imperative. He therefore determined to make for "Hood's River", ascend it as far as it was navigable, and cross the Barren Lands on foot, carrying light canoes, constructed from the material of the larger one, for the crossing of such rivers and lakes as barred his course.

His presage of bad weather was soon fulfilled. For three days the party was weather-bound at Point Turnagain by a gale, accompanied by a mixture of rain and snow. Hunting brought in little return, and in desperation it was determined to cross Melville Sound before a strong wind and a heavy sea. The traverse was made, but on its completion the voyagers found themselves on a high and rocky lee shore, lashed by a raging surf. "The wind being on the beam, the canoes drifted fast to leeward; and on rounding a point, the recoil was so great that they were with difficulty kept from foundering." After searching in vain for a harbour, they landed on an open and sandy beach where one canoe was flung ashore and sustained some injury. The drenched and exhausted crews had to satisfy their hunger with berries and distillation of a native leaf, known by the appetizing name of "swamp tea". In the next two days, however, they killed some deer, and reached the mouth of Hood River in Bathurst Inlet with food in hand.

The party which had made the daring voyage along the coast and was attempting the even more dangerous return by land, consisted of twenty men: Lieutenant Franklin, Dr. Richardson; Back, midshipman; Hepburn, British seaman; Solomon Belanger and Benoit, *voyageurs*; Adam and St. Germain, Indian interpreters; and Augustus, Eskimo interpreter, were destined to survive the march, and reach Fort Providence; Vaillant, Crédit, J. B. Belanger, Perrault, Fontano, Samandré, Peltier, Beauparlant, and Michel, *voyageurs*, and Hood, mishipman, died on the journey; Junius, Eskimo interpreter, strayed from the party, and his fate was never known.

The explorers paddled up Hood River until they reached a point where shallows and rapids made further progress by water impossible. The canoes were then broken up; two smaller ones constructed; excess baggage was cached, and the balance divided into burdens of ninety pounds each for the men, the officers carrying such loads "as their strength permitted". The overland march began through a barren and hilly country, which just afforded enough brush to cook supper. It was September the 1st, and observations made Fort Enterprise 149 miles away.

On the second day a foot of snow accompanied by a high wind made marching very difficult. The men who carried the

canoes were cruelly buffeted and exhausted by efforts to keep their balance. The broken stony ground was very distressing to moccasined feet.

On the 5th the last pemmican was eaten. The 6th made the full grimness of the situation evident. A violent gale and three feet of snow kept the men confined to their tents for the whole day, in a temperature of twenty above, with no food and no fire, for the moss was drenched.

Faced with immediate starvation, they were forced to proceed the next day though the wind was strong and extremely chill. Franklin fainted from exhaustion and sudden exposure to the cold, but was revived with a morsel of portable soup. He refused to diminish the common stock, until "several of the men urged him to it with much kindness". And so they journeyed on through snow feet deep and over frozen swamps where the surface frequently broke, plunging them up to the knees in icy water. The men who carried the canoes often stumbled, and finally Benoit fell and smashed the one he bore. Frayed tempers showed up when Franklin angrily accused him of breaking it deliberately, and he, backed by his comrades, hotly denied the charge.

For ease in walking the party was now advancing in single file, the *voyageurs* taking turns to break the trail, and Hood following in second place with a compass to keep the leader in the desired direction. Their only food was a lichen (*tripe de roche*) gathered from the rocks, and an occasional partridge.

On the 9th they reached Cracroft's River where the canoe proved useless, as it required caulking with hot resin, and no fire was obtainable. The crossing was made on a range of rocks where several of the heavily-laden men slipped into the water, and were with difficulty dragged to safety by their comrades. From here a short march brought them to the bank of a river which emptied out of a large lake.

At this point a disastrous, but, under the circumstances, unavoidable error was made. Had Franklin recognized the lake as the Congecatha-wha-chaga of Samuel Hearne, he would have inclined to the right along its western shore, and by making an inconsiderable detour, have avoided any serious water obstacle until he reached the Coppermine. But Hearne's longitude, which

differed from his by more than two degrees (well over sixty miles), misled him into conducting his party across the river, and inadvertently placing it inside a great arc formed by a chain of river and lake, from which he was a week in extricating it, with scarcely a day's gain in direct advance. As they receded from the river the country became rugged; and the hillsides were covered with loose stones, which, being covered with snow, caused great distress to the burdened men, who at any time might stumble on a jagged edge, or plunge into a crater two feet deep.

On the 10th a herd of musk oxen was sighted; hunters were sent out, after spending two hours in making an approach (they were far too weak to attempt any pursuit, if the herd took fright), succeeded in killing one. A few willow roots were grubbed out of the snow, a fire kindled, and the travellers enjoyed the first full meal in six days. On the 13th "with extreme mortification" they found themselves on the shore of a large body of water, which was later ascertained to be the Contwoy-to, or Rum Lake, of Samuel Hearne, the upper arm of the fatal triangle in which they were enclosed. Ferrying by canoe across such an expanse was out of the question, and with bitter disgust they turned almost back on their tracks to the north-west, the direction in which the lake appeared to narrow. The discovery of excellent berries provided some comfort: Franklin complains that the *tripe de roche* gave strength for a short time only, and was producing in Hood and Vaillant the bowel complaint which was ultimately fatal to both.

He now learned to his extreme annoyance that the fishing-nets, which he had hoped to use, had been thrown away by his mutinous followers, and the floats burned. Making the best of a bad job, he further lightened the loads of the men by throwing away all instruments and equipment that could be spared. Dr. Richardson made the heart-breaking sacrifice of a bag of geological specimens which he had carried for three weeks.

Continuing their march the travellers found that great hills sloped down to the very margin of the lake, and made walking most difficult to men in their weak and exhausted condition. But Cr dit, who had been missing for forty-eight hours, appeared with two deer he had shot, and these supplied enough

strength to bring the party to the lower end of the lake whence a river "flowed with great velocity through a broken and rocky channel". They ferried themselves across in the canoe and, turning again to the south, obtained the first glimpse of the sun in six days. Observations now revealed that owing to their ignorance of the compass variation they had inclined too much to the east and were several miles off the route to Enterprise. The *voyageurs* cried out hopelessly that they were lost and would hardly consent to go on. Franklin had almost lost control, for the threatened forfeiture of wages had no weight with men who were beginning to despair of their lives.

On the 26th they reached the bank of a river which was recognized as the turbulent Coppermine. And now two men came forward and informed Franklin that some little time before the canoe had been dropped and smashed irretrievably. "The anguish this intelligence occasioned me may be conceived, but it is beyond my power to describe it." The river now seemed an impassable barrier. Back, who alone of the officers retained any vigour, led a detachment downstream to look for a crossing, but returned after some days unsuccessful. Richardson nearly lost his life in an attempt to swim across with a line in water at 38° F. Eventually St. Germain fashioned a raft of willows, which he paddled across the torrent; this was drawn back and forth with lines; and the whole party found itself on the left bank of the Coppermine, some forty miles from Enterprise. Eight days had been lost at that fatal obstacle, which was fittingly named Obstruction Rapids.

The *voyageurs* now shook their officers by the hand, declaring that their dangers were over. But Franklin, who had been undismayed when they were in despair, was not misled by their unreasoning optimism. He knew that several of the party were too weak to finish the journey without better nourishment than was afforded by *tripe de roche* and casual game, and therefore sent Back ahead with Solomon Belanger, St. Germain, and Beuparlant, ordering them to pick up provisions at Enterprise, and either return themselves or send Indians to the relief of the main party. He himself tramped on as best he could, but his little band was beginning to straggle. Richardson was walking behind with the ailing Hood; Vaillant, who could not digest the

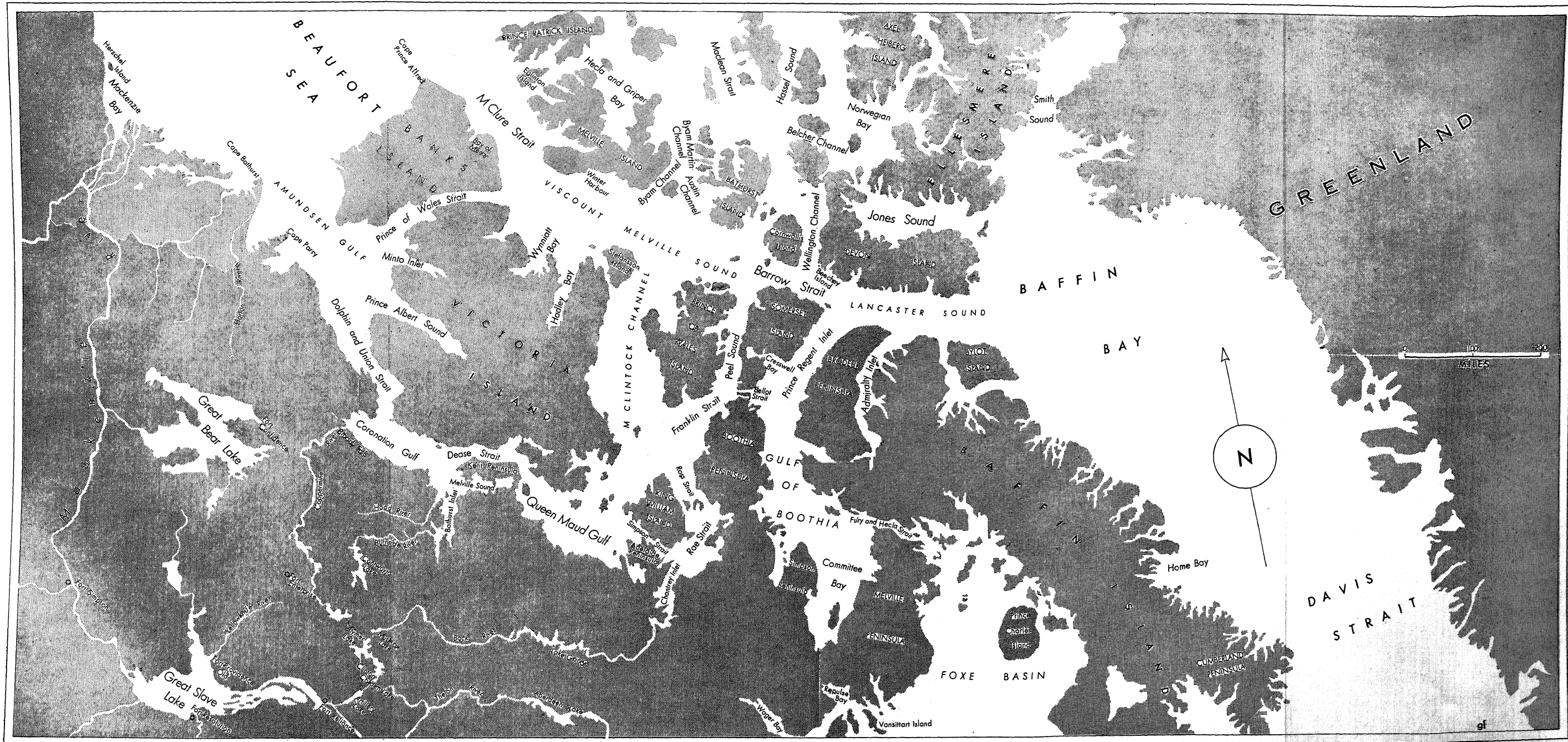
*tripe de roche*, and Crédit, who had exhausted himself in hunting, had also dropped to the rear. In the bitter wind each man walked as fast as he could, the stronger waiting from time to time in the shelter of some rock or shrub for their weaker comrades to come up. At noon on October the 6th Samandré reported that Crédit and Vaillant had collapsed at different points on the march and had been left behind. Richardson, though partly paralysed by his attempted exploit at the Coppermine, went back alone for one and a half miles, found Vaillant, and persuaded him to make a fresh effort; he then searched for Crédit in vain, for the track was by this time obliterated by drifting snow. On the way back he passed Vaillant, down in the snow again and almost speechless.

On hearing this report Franklin implored the strongest men to go to the rescue of Vaillant. They refused, and demanded in their turn that they should be permitted to abandon tents and cooking utensils and make a dash for Enterprise; but on their chief representing that no officer was strong enough to keep up with them, that without the guidance of a compass they would inevitably lose their way and become scattered through the strong continuing to abandon the weak, they consented to proceed as before.

Poor young Hood, however, had come to his journey's end. That night he spoke much to his leader of his younger brother, praising his "talents and application", and begging that he might be Franklin's companion, should the latter come again to the Arctic. For himself his only request was that he might be left behind, and cease to be a drag on his comrades. Richardson did not oppose the suggestion: he merely expressed his determination to stay with his patient; and it was agreed that the two should be left with a tent at the first point which afforded both shelter and a convenient supply of *tripe de roche*.

On the following day the little company, having arrived at a sheltered spot where the *tripe de roche* was plentiful, pitched a tent and left their two comrades with most of the baggage, including a small keg of powder, which would, it was hoped, be an inducement to the Indians to come to their rescue. The Scottish seaman, John Hepburn, earned Franklin's lasting gratitude by volunteering to remain behind with the two officers.









The afternoon journey led the dwindling troop across a low plain where the snow lay loose and very deep. Arrived at the evening encampment, J. B. Belanger, bursting into tears, declared his inability to go farther, and begged permission to return to Richardson's tent. Michel made the same request. Franklin consented, and the next morning left them behind at the encampment. Hardly had they set out when Perrault and Fontano were seized with faintness, and the former went back to join Belanger and Michel. Fontano struggled on for a distance over the smooth and glassy surface of a lake, and fought his way up the bank into deep snow where he collapsed. He was endangering the whole party, so he too was sent back "after bidding us farewell in the tenderest manner". Fontano, who had served under the great Napoleon, had endeared himself to his officers by his friendly and cheerful demeanour. "We watched him with inexpressible anxiety for some time and were rejoiced to find, though he got on slowly, that he kept his legs better than before." Nineteen men had followed their leader into the Arctic, and of these there now remained only five. Three days later they reached Enterprise and found the place utterly deserted, without a trace of their Indian allies or of the promised supplies. A note left by Back, who had arrived two days before, gave little comfort: he had gone on to find the Indians, failing which he proposed to go to Providence, a round trip of three hundred miles.

Recovering from the first shock of disappointment, the travellers were "gratified to find" a quantity of deer skins and bones which promised immediate sustenance. They boarded up windows, and tore up for fuel the floors of all rooms except the one they occupied. Temperatures were ranging from fifteen to twenty below, Franklin noted, and the winter was much earlier than in the previous season.

The next day Adam's and Franklin's limbs were too swollen to move; the *voyageurs* nursed them while the Eskimo, Augustus, tried to fish. Three days after their arrival Solomon Belanger reached the fort with a note from Back. He had come through a howling blizzard, and only recovered his speech after receiving a massage and a bowl of hot soup. Back reported that he had been unable to find the Indians, could not set out for Providence until the lakes and rivers were frozen solid, and was now

encamped a little to the south, awaiting orders. Franklin's first impulse was to write off the lives of those left in the rear and to take his men directly to Providence. Adam, however, could not move, Peltier and Samandré preferred their present state of slow starvation to the sharper pain of exertion : so their leader packed all journals relating to the expedition, and charging Peltier that, if the Indians came, they should carry them to Providence, set out himself with Benoit and Augustus. On the second day out he broke a snowshoe and returned to Enterprise, while the other two completed their journey and were the first of the expedition to escape from the wilderness.

Back at Enterprise Franklin found that Peltier was failing, not from any want of spirit, but because the soup (made by baking bones until friable, and then boiling them), burnt his mouth. One evening the little Frenchman, hearing the crunch of a foot-step in the snow outside, cried out, "Ah ! le monde," thinking that help had arrived. But it was only Richardson and Hepburn who entered, bringing news which deepened the horror of their situation.

On the first day of their isolation Richardson, Hood, and Hepburn had been confined to their tent by a heavy blizzard. They were aroused the next morning by the arrival of Michel bearing from Franklin a note which acquainted Richardson with the return of Michel and Belanger, and advised him to move his camp on a short distance to a clump of pines where better food and fuel were obtainable. Questioned rather sharply about Belanger, the Iroquois replied that they had strayed apart in the night. He assisted in moving the camp, then borrowed Richardson's hatchet, and went off into the bush, whence he soon returned, bringing meat, the flesh, as he said, of a wolf, which had been killed by the stroke of a deer's horn. Later occurrences gave rise to the suspicion that it had been taken from the body of Perrault or Belanger.

For several ensuing days the Iroquois was the victim of a sullen mood, and, despite the peevish remonstrances of Hood, now confined to his bed, would not share in the work of gathering *tripe de roche* and fuel. On October the 20th, when Hepburn had gone out to cut down a tree, and Richardson to gather food,

the latter was startled to hear the report of a gun and a few minutes later loud shouts from Hepburn. Rushing back he found Hood lying by the fire in front of the tent, shot through the head. A glance satisfied the surgeon that the shot had been fired from behind; but Michel asserted that the gun had gone off by accident, and repelled the charge of murder so fiercely that his companions thought it prudent to hide their suspicions. They moved the body to a clump of willows, and came back to the fire to read the Burial Service. The presence of the Indian at this ceremony was loathsome to the two Scots, but they dared not object, and he, for his part, would give them no chance of conversing alone. Being now free to proceed, they made a meal off poor Hood's buffalo robe and set forth. Late in the afternoon the Indian dropped behind, as he said, to gather *tripe de roche*; more probably to put his gun in order "for another act of murder". After a hasty conference with Hepburn, Richardson concealed himself behind a bush, and when Michel came up, stepped out and shot him dead with a pistol. Less than three weeks before, Franklin had proposed to give the Indian a special reward because, until crazed by fear and hunger, he had of all the *voyageurs* been the best and most willing worker.

The fate of Perrault and J. B. Belanger was never known. Franklin's theory was that Michel had murdered the latter with cannibal intent, and then, on Perrault's coming up, had killed him to escape detection. The disappearance of Fontano could be accounted for without burdening the Indian's memory with a fourth murder.

Though the failure to send them relief had been to Richardson and Hepburn a presage of fresh disaster, they were shocked at the spectacle which awaited them at Enterprise. "No words can convey an idea of the filth and wretchedness that met our eyes on looking around. Our own misery had stolen upon us by degrees, and we were accustomed to the contemplation of each other's emaciated figures, but the ghastly countenances, dilated eyeballs, and sepulchral voices of Captain Franklin and those with him were more than we at first could bear."

Despite the shock he experienced, Richardson at once took control of his demoralized comrades. He rated Franklin and the men for the condition of the hut, bade them roll up their blankets

by day and exert themselves for order and comfort; and insisted on daily religious observances. His efforts, which did something to cheer, could do nothing to strengthen the sufferers: within two days Peltier and Samandré collapsed and died within a few hours; Adam was very low; Hepburn's limbs were beginning to swell; and all complained of the frightful sores caused by sleeping on the floor in their emaciated condition. The "will to live" could not carry them much farther.

While the men at Enterprise were sinking under the hardships they had endured, their indomitable comrade, George Back, had been battling cold and famine in an effort to bring them relief. With Solomon Belanger, Beuparlant, and the Indian interpreter, St. Germain, he had parted from his commander at Obstruction Rapid, and pushed ahead for Enterprise. On finding this post deserted and without provisions, Back formed the resolution of going on to Providence, but as further labouring over rocks and across defiles was out of the question for men in their starving condition, and as the watercourses were not yet sufficiently frozen to afford a safe passage, he listened to the suggestion of his comrades that they should follow the tracks of the deer as long as they led in the direction where the Indians might be found. They collected a few deer skins, and set out to the south-west. St. Germain began to hunt but, in his weakened condition, without success. Belanger was sent back to report to Franklin, and in his absence Beuparlant became much depressed. On one afternoon, as they were passing along the margin of a lake in search of a place for fishing, Back tried to comfort the *voyageur* by speaking of the mercy of the Supreme Being, but in a situation so pitiful his words lacked conviction, and "passed as common discourse". Beuparlant merely said that he wished to rest, and lay down in his blanket on the lakeshore, while the other two made camp at a little distance in a clump of trees. Fog and darkness descended on them; they fired off guns, and when Beuparlant answered the signal, went to sleep, not unduly concerned for one whose plight was little worse than their own. They found him next morning, frozen to death, "his limbs extended and swelled enormously, and as hard as the ice that was near him". Both Back and St. Germain burst into tears:

it had been through weakness and not brutality that they had left their comrade to die on the snow.

Neither hunting nor fishing had been attended with any success, and the little band (now rejoined by Belanger) was in danger of utter starvation when the spectacle of a few crows in the tree-tops drew them to a spot where they found several heads of deer, without eyes or tongues, and half-buried in snow and ice. They gnawed at these until the pangs of hunger were in some degree allayed.

It is doubtful if the record of human endurance affords an equal to the faith and tenacity which Back displayed in the week which followed. For himself, he confesses, life was a "thing indifferent", but the recollection of his comrades at Enterprise stung him to renewed exertion. But when he urged the men to set out with him to Providence, they refused: he wished to kill them ("faire périr")—they must have rest. So while the *voyageurs* busied themselves with gathering for immediate use the skin and other fragments of deer that the wolves had rejected, Back, "with great care and self-denial", collected two packets of dried meat and sinew, "sufficient to last for eight days at the rate of one indifferent meal a day". It would require fourteen days to make Providence, he composedly reckoned, but the prospect of full relief at the journey's end would tide them over six days of starvation. In despair of meeting the Indians, his two companions finally consented to go, and even let him impose on them a measure of his own abstinence, though they would snatch at morsels when his back was turned.

Setting out on October the 30th, they observed the centre of a lake darkened with a gathering of wolves and crows, and "supposing", says Back, preserving even in this extremity, his sense of humour, "that such a convocation was not idly met, we made for them and came in for a share in a deer". That night they struck the direct route for Providence, and for two days struggled on in great weakness, and suffering intensely from the cold, though the weather was mild.

On November the 3rd St. Germain came upon the tracks of Indians. He went ahead, and on reaching the camp of Akaitcho procured help for his comrades who were brought in on the following morning. In response to Back's entreaties the chief

declared that he needed no prompting to send aid to Franklin, now that his situation was known—"his conduct was generous and humane". Back saw the rescuers with two sledges loaded with meat set out for Enterprise, and, mindful of the records for which so dreadful a price had been paid, he begged the Indians, should Franklin be dead, to collect carefully and bring away all the papers they could find. On this point his mind was soon set at rest: four days later he received a note from his commander assuring him of his safety and "giving all the fatal particulars which had befallen". Akaitcho sent off a fresh supply of provisions, and Back, seeing his mission accomplished, set off for Providence, which he reached on the 21st, exactly three months after the commencement of the return journey from Turnagain.

The rescue party was two days on the road to Enterprise. Adam had been so low on the morning of the 7th that Franklin remained in bed with him to minister warmth and comfort, while Richardson went out to assist in the dismantling of an outhouse for fuel. In a few minutes the doctor burst in with the news that the Indians were at hand, and the kindly creatures were close behind him, bringing in dried deer's meat, fat, and tongue, on which the starving men fell ravenously. The helpless Adam, fed prudently by his countrymen, escaped with little suffering, but the three white men had dreadful intestinal pains. "We were perfectly aware of the danger, and Dr. Richardson repeatedly cautioned us to be moderate, but he was himself unable to practise the caution he so judiciously recommended."

Adam made a quick recovery; the others, who had not yielded so readily to weakness and exhaustion, were unfit to travel for some days. They then made their way to the camp of the Indian chief, by whom they were kindly received and given an escort to Providence. Mr. Weeks, the factor at this post with whom Franklin had been on most unfriendly terms, met him on the road with supplies and gave him dispatches containing the news of the successful issue of Parry's voyage and of his own and Back's promotion. Less pleasing was the intelligence that, owing to the temporary confusion caused by the amalgamation of the two fur companies which had taken place that summer, the supplies from which Akaitcho and his long-suffering Indians were to

receive their wages had not yet come up. Back had already crossed Slave Lake to procure a partial reward from the trading stations there. (Small wonder that that enterprising officer was "burnt out" at the age of forty-one.) Franklin also learned that Wentzel and his Indian companions had suffered great privations in their return journey up the Coppermine in the previous July, and had been obliged to live for eleven days on *tripe de roche*.

Little trace remained of the irritation which had existed during the previous winter between the explorers and the Company officials. All feelings of unkindness had been dissolved on the one hand by the generous humanity of the traders, and on the other by the sufferings and heroism which had achieved the success dismissed a few months before by Simpson as impossible. Franklin, however, felt a resentment for Wentzel's failure to place a food cache at Enterprise which the explanations offered by the latter failed wholly to remove. The slackness of the Indians and shortage of ammunition were, as he urged, some excuse for his omission; but when he saw that there was no help to be obtained from the natives he ought surely to have made urgent application to Weeks at Providence, or McVicar at Moose Deer Island, to rescue the travellers from want, if not starvation. The privations which he himself had suffered emphasized the certainty that they also would be in need. The best excuse for Wentzel is the inadequate one that he allowed himself to be persuaded by the assurances of the Indians that none of the expedition would return from the coast alive.

The three surviving officers and the faithful Hepburn spent the winter at Moose Deer Island Fort, and by February found their strength nearly recovered and their appetites declining to normal. In May, when about to depart, they learned that the stores, so long delayed, had arrived, enabling them to pay their debt to Akaitcho, and make gifts to all the Indians who had assisted the expedition, with a special bounty to their rescuers of the previous autumn. This distribution was attended to by the traders, for the explorers had in the meantime left for England, which they reached in October 1822 after an absence of forty-two months.

Franklin's First Journey is by itself enough to give him high



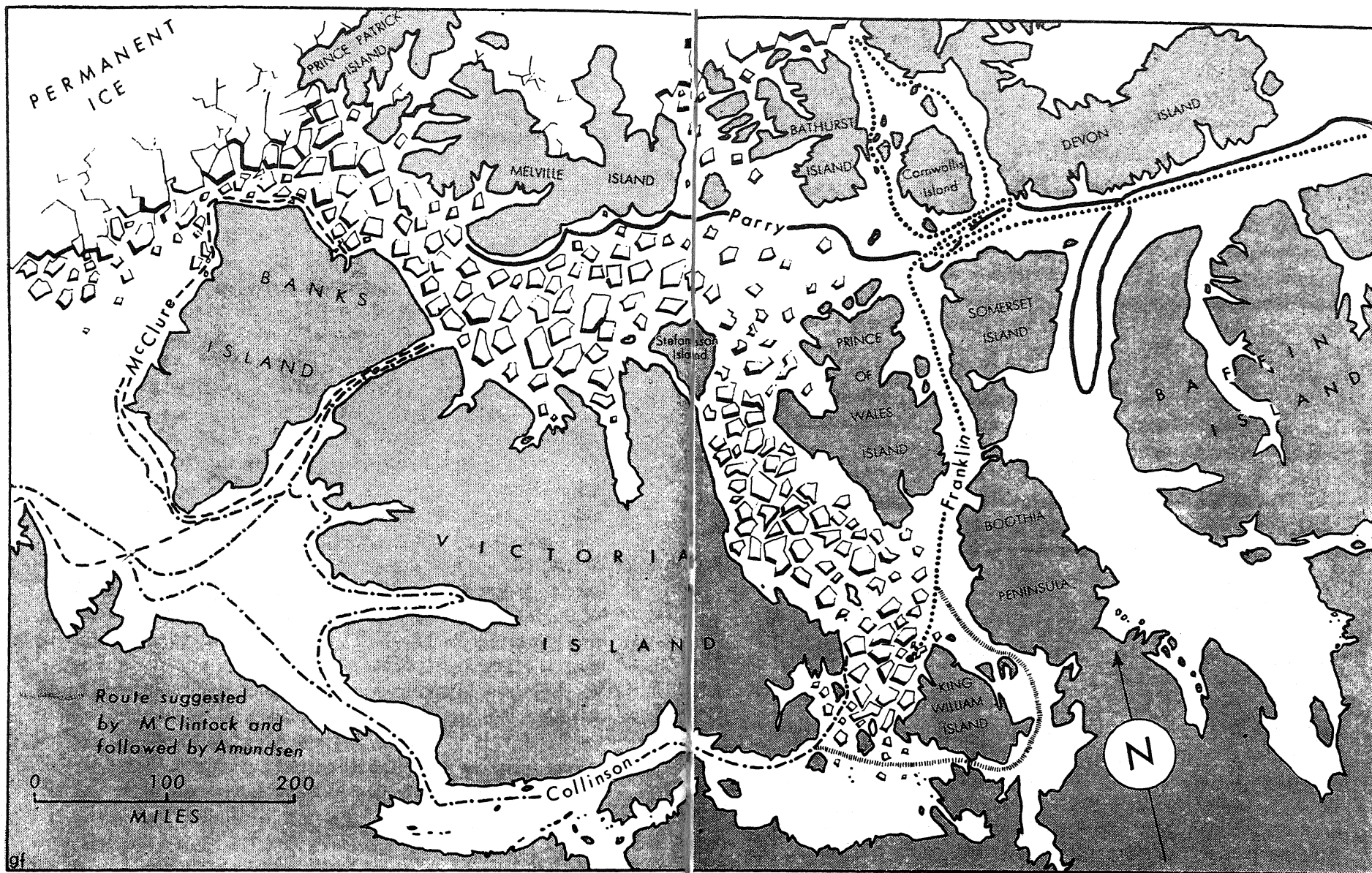
rank among the explorers of the nineteenth century. In a single summer he had laid down nearly six hundred miles of a coast which had cost Hearne and Mackenzie much labour even to approach, and had acquired a first-hand knowledge of conditions which permitted the rest of the Arctic shoreline to be mapped with comparative cheapness and ease. He had put a roof on the map of Canada, and given a definite shape to the North American continent. Yet his very eminence has exposed him to the harsh process of "debunking" to which all Victorians are liable; his reputation has been wantonly attacked by the modern explorer, Vilhjalmur Stefánsson, whose character is far too great to gain any additional lustre from so cheap and common a device. It is true that the performance of his First Journey cannot of itself excuse the loss of life by which it was achieved. On the other hand, a man who laboured so long and so strenuously for the extension of knowledge is not to be hastily condemned for mis-carriage in an enterprise which was quite experimental, and where chance and the unknown exerted an influence beyond his power to predict or control.

Franklin was the agent of the British Government, lent to it by the Admiralty, to map the Arctic coast from the mouth of the Coppermine to the northern limit of Hudson Bay. He was to navigate the shores of an unknown and ice-infested sea by canoe for hundreds of miles with no trained nautical assistance other than that provided by two midshipmen (chosen in part for their proficiency as artists) and a naval surgeon. For the furnishing of "guides, interpreters, and game-killers", as well as for supplies and transport to the jumping-off point he was to rely on the fur companies and their Indian clients. To them is to be attributed the condition in which the expedition reached the mouth of the Coppermine. Franklin's undivided responsibility began on July the 20th, 1821. With fifteen days' rations in hand, and not *knowing* that the resources of the country would prove inadequate, he could have turned back from the coast only at the cost of professional ruin. It would have implied a censure on those who had planned the expedition, and would have wasted the money and effort that had been already expended. He therefore pursued his explorations while food and weather permitted, executed his orders to the limit of his powers, and paid the penalty which

savage nature seldom fails to exact from the too optimistic pioneer.

Though Stefánsson asserts, rightly, no doubt, that Franklin could have lived off the land, one ventures to suppose that the art of survival in the Canadian North is the gift not of nature, but of experience, and that it is no reproach to a British naval officer to have starved in those regions, when Wentzel's Indians, who had grown up on the fringe of the Barren Lands, went for eleven days without game. He may be to some degree blameworthy for having poor relations with the traders and insufficient control over the *voyageurs*. But in the first instance it is abundantly clear that the faults were not all on one side; in the second, an officer who, from the age of fourteen, had been bound to his associates for eighteen years by the ties of naval discipline, professional spirit, and, in some cases, personal regard, may be pardoned for his clumsy handling of frightened, unwilling men, alien to him in language and sympathies, and serving for wages only. The true quality of the man appears in the resolution with which he kept his *voyageurs* on the march, when they were ready to lie down and die in their tracks.

The disaster, then, was due to the tenor of Franklin's instructions, for which he was not responsible, to the unseasonably, early descent of winter on the Barren Lands, for which he was not responsible either, and to the failure to deposit supplies at Enterprise, an omission due either to Wentzel's neglect or to the shortage of ammunition consequent upon confusion in the fur-trade. The issue of the expedition, in so far as it was in the power of the leader to determine it, was a success; and if in his Narrative it is rather Back and Richardson who command our admiration, that is to be attributed to the author's modesty, and not to his deficiency in manliness or qualities of leadership and administration. He was no ordinary man who, without means of coercion, kept a starving, mutinous, and demoralized crew together for six weeks by sheer force of character. His odyssey of the North is an episode worthy to rank with any in the pioneer history of America.



Showing how the "Ice Stream" from the Beaufort Sea stopped, in succession, Parry's first voyage, Franklin, McClure (at two separate points), and Collinson; also the route recommended by McClintock and followed by Amundsen.

## Chapter 6



### Parry's Voyages, 1819-1825

ON May the 20th, 1819, three days before Franklin and his companions sailed from Gravesend, the *Hecla*, barque of 375 tons, and the *Griper*, brig of 180 tons, cleared the Orkneys and set sail for Greenland. The expedition, under the command of Lieutenant William Parry, with Lieutenant Matthew Liddon of the *Griper* as his second-in-command, was under orders to attempt the North West Passage by way of Lancaster Sound. A reward of £10,000 was offered the ships' companies for the accomplishment of the Passage, with half that sum payable if the expedition reached 110° W. longitude.

The commander of the expedition was twenty-nine years of age. Though his record of service was undistinguished, he had been marked by studious application to his profession, and had written a treatise on astronomy as an aid to navigation, which had attracted the notice of the Admiralty, and procured his appointment as second-in-command to John Ross in 1818. Parry must have been known to dissent from the report of his chief, or he would not have been given command of an expedition directed expressly to Lancaster Sound, but he never countenanced the abuse to which Ross had been subjected, and showed him kindness by shipping his nephew, later the celebrated Sir James Clark Ross, as midshipman on the *Hecla*.

On June the 18th the ships encountered ice off Greenland; on the 24th they were helplessly beset, and so remained for several days. On the 30th they were able to progress by warping (i.e. by running a cable ahead to a mass of ice and winding the ship up to it with a capstan), and got through the obstruction after eight hours of incessant labour. A heavy gale nearly drove them back

on to the ice from which they had escaped, and for some time they fought into the wind in a situation of considerable danger. The spectacle of loose ice being dashed against the bergs with a noise like thunder was, observes Parry, at once "sublime and terrific".

When the storm subsided, continuous ice was seen to the westward, and for many days the lookout sought for a "lead" in vain. On July the 18th the ice relaxed a little, and an attempt was made to warp through, but, in the advanced state of the season, the fragments to which the *Hecla* successively attached herself proved too light, and made endeavour fruitless by "coming home" with the most exasperating facility. On the 27th the *Griper*, followed by her consort, pushed into a promising lead; but the eddy caused by her motion, "by one of those accidents to which this navigation is liable", says the patient Parry, pulled a piece of loose ice into the channel in her wake, necessitating seven hours' work with the ice-saws before the *Hecla* could rejoin her. Two days later the crews, though still surrounded by ice, were gladdened by the pitch which indicated their approach to clearer water, and on the 31st arrived off the cliffs guarding the entrance to Lancaster Sound.

As the *Griper* had proved a very unhandy ship, which could keep up with her consort only when sailing before the wind, Parry determined to leave her behind until the nature of the inlet was known. He went on under a press of sail, and "in the course of the evening, saw the northern shore of the Sound looming through the clouds which hung over it".

On the morning of August the 3rd the *Hecla* found herself becalmed and pitching heavily in a swell from the west, which was welcomed as a sign of an open sea in the desired direction. The *Griper* was descried eight miles behind, bringing an easterly breeze with her. By noon both ships were running west before a gale, the mast-heads crowded with officers and seamen eagerly awaiting reports from the crow's-nest. No land appeared to the west, and the channel was unobstructed except for a few old bergs. Before midnight the *Hecla* had run a hundred miles, the continuity of the inlet was fairly established, and, says the sober commander, with placid superiority, "the most sanguine . . . had even calculated the bearing and distance of Icy Cape" (on

the far side of Alaska) "as a matter of no very difficult or improbable accomplishment".

These hopes were, however, soon disappointed. Late on the 4th the *Hecla* was obliged to haul suddenly to the northward to avoid being entrapped in a bay of ice on which a considerable surf was rolling, and a survey revealed continuous ice to the west. Failing to get around this obstacle to the north, Parry struck into the southerly exit from the Sound, which he named Prince Regent's Inlet. Here, after a run of some days, he was compelled to heave to by fog which not only made navigation dangerous but left him in complete ignorance of the direction of the wind and the course he was steering, as the nearness of the magnetic pole made his compass useless. The two ships remained anchored in the lee of a floe until a lift in the fog disclosed a much larger mass of ice on which they were being rapidly drifted, and they only escaped destruction by laboriously beating out to windward. Parry resolved to turn back and make a fresh attempt by the channel to the west of the sound, which he had named Barrow Strait. He had penetrated Regent's Inlet to latitude  $72^{\circ}$ , and conjectured (as was actually the case) that it was connected with Hudson Bay.

Back in Barrow Strait Parry found the weather his friend, and in the next two weeks made the great run to the west which established him as the most successful of the Arctic navigators. To the north he successively sighted and named Wellington Channel, Cornwallis, Bathurst, and Melville Islands. To the south he observed a bluff promontory backed by a loom of land to which he gave the name of Cape Walker, a landmark which was to acquire great significance from the place it was given in Franklin's last "Official Instructions". During part of the run he was much hampered by fog, but kept the ships on their course by the ingenious method of ordering the steersman of the *Hecla* to keep the *Griper*, just visible a quarter of a mile away, dead astern, while the latter was directed to keep her consort dead ahead. On September the 1st they were off Melville Island, and on the 3rd, longitude  $110^{\circ}$  W. was crossed at latitude  $74^{\circ} 44' 20''$  N., amid the rejoicings of the crews, who were now assured of the first part of the Admiralty reward.

For some days the two ships coasted along Melville Island

with little obstruction, and Parry himself was beginning to "indulge in those flattering hopes of which often-repeated disappointments cannot altogether deprive us", when he was brought to by a compact body of ice wedged against the shore, with not a drop of water visible beyond it. He had reached the fringe of the great ice mass of the Beaufort Sea. The *Hecla* and *Griper* anchored close in shore in the shelter of huge masses of grounded ice, and waited for the obstruction to clear.

The ice having moved off shore, some little progress was made westward, but Parry now began to experience the dangers of navigating a narrow channel between coast and floating ice; finally, on the 20th, the *Griper* was pushed ashore and nearly rolled over. Lieutenant Liddon, who had been incapacitated by rheumatism, being invited by Parry to come aboard the *Hecla* until the danger was over, replied that he would be the last, not the first, to quit the ship, and lay on the lee side of the deck giving orders, until a northerly wind drove back the ice, and the rising tide refloated his ship undamaged. As the season was growing late the two vessels turned eastwards to seek a suitable berth for winter quarters.

On September the 24th they arrived off a well-sheltered bay and found its surface already covered with seven inches of "young ice". Saws were got out, and officers and men mingled in the hilarious game of cutting a canal. As the channel lengthened, the sailors, "who are always fond of doing things their own way", took advantage of a northerly wind to rig masts on some of the ice blocks and sail them out with a great saving of time and labour. On the following day this resource was no longer available, as the outer part of the channel had re-frozen in the course of the night. When a block had been cut, men stood on one edge to depress it, while others with ropes, oars, and boat-hooks pulled and pushed it under the ice to the edge of the canal. "The officers of both ships took the lead in this employ, several of them standing up to their knees in water frequently during the day with the thermometer at twelve degrees, and never higher than sixteen". In three days a canal two and a third miles long was cut, and on September the 26th both ships were safely berthed in Winter Harbour, Melville Island. For the first time British men-of-war were to winter in the Arctic, and Parry, with

no precedent to guide him, had to provide for the good order, health, and morale of two crews for a period of ten months. The fate which had befallen the expeditions of Munck, Knight, and Bering in somewhat milder latitudes was a reminder of what could happen if essential precautions were omitted.

The earlier practice of the navy afforded him some guidance: Captain Cook had set the example of careful attention to the diet and general health of his crew; and, during the long and wearisome blockades of the late war, Nelson had used amateur dramatics as an entertainment for both officers and men. Parry proceeded to dismantle all but the lower masts, to erect housings over the hulks which remained, and to bank them with snow. As an anti-scorbutic, he directed that every man should drink a quantity of lime juice and sugar daily in the presence of an officer appointed to that duty—"Sailors must resemble children in all those points where their own health and comfort are concerned". Pickles and vinegar were taken at regular intervals, and "in no one instance, either in quantity or in quality, was the least preference given to the officers". The members of the crews were inspected daily for personal cleanliness, adequacy of clothing, and the condition of their beds; the ships for signs of ice or dampness. Regular exercise on shore or, in bad weather, on the ship, was compulsory; and the captain conferred regularly with the surgeon on means of promoting good living conditions. On a subsequent voyage Parry ordered his men to protect their loins against the cold by stitching a broad canvas belt about the waist, but in this instance he encountered the passive resistance of all ranks, who considered the wearing of "stays" derogatory to their sex.

To provide employment for the officers and entertainment for all literate persons, a weekly newspaper was produced under the editorship of Captain Edward Sabine of the Royal Artillery, who had joined the expedition as an expert on terrestrial magnetism. A theatre was opened under the management of Lieutenant Beechey, and several plays, including a musical comedy, were presented. The commander himself took part in these productions, "considering it not the least essential part of his duty to contribute to the general cheerfulness".

The winter was uneventful. Parry's reference to the dead



stillness of sea and land under a blanket of snow, with the only cheerful thing in sight the smoke from the ships' chimneys, strikes a familiar note to any native of the Prairies, nor will such a person be surprised to learn that temperatures lower than fifty below zero were recorded, though these must have been more prolonged than is usual in the Canadian West to freeze the bay ice to a thickness of six and a half feet.

In late June pools of water appeared on the surface of the ice, and Parry observed what became a commonplace with his successors, that at this season land travel was made next to impossible by the torrents of water which flowed down from the hills. On July the 26th the ships moved from their anchorage, and on August the 1st, 1820, exactly a year after their entry into Lancaster Sound, cleared the harbour and made sail to the west.

For some days, though the sea was fairly open, the breezes were contrary, and as they beat to windward, both vessels, especially the unhandy *Griper*, lost much way in going around masses of ice. In the vicinity of Cape Hay they found themselves pinned to the beach by continuous floes, some of which, it was ascertained, measured forty-two feet in thickness. Lieutenant Beechey ascended a hilltop and to the south-west, at a great distance, made out land with a loom extending far to the eastward. To the west, as far as the eye could reach, was a continuous field of ice which showed no sign of yielding to the easterly breeze then blowing. Parry had reached his "farthest", longitude  $113^{\circ} 4' 43.5''$  W. After bestowing the name of Banks Land on the looming mass to the south-west, he extricated his ships, and turning eastward coasted along the floe, seeking in vain a lead to the south which might bring him to the North American mainland. He was on the northern edge of the ice-stream from the Beaufort Sea which thirty years later was to thwart the efforts of the bold McClure to make the Passage from the west.

The disappointment of both officers and men must have been great. After reaching the fringe of the Western Sea, which would, as they suspected, have conducted them without land interruption to Bering Strait, they had encountered a solid and apparently permanent obstacle, and were denied the secondary satisfaction of reaching south to the mainland and joining hands with Franklin. Parry decided to cut his losses and run for Lan-

caster Sound before the brief period of Arctic navigation was over. He made a short survey of the coast of Baffin Land, left his sluggish consort behind for good and reached England days ahead of her. By breaking into a new area of discovery (as Hudson had done), and by driving a shaft of some five hundred miles into, and practically through, the Canadian archipelago, he was to prove not only the most prudent but the most successful of Arctic navigators. No other ship was destined to reach Melville Island without the aid of steam and blasting-powder.

Parry made two more attempts at the North West Passage without achieving anything like his initial success. In 1821-1823 he took the *Fury* and *Hecla* into Hudson Bay, and spent three summers seeking an outlet to the Arctic. From enquiry and maps sketched by Eskimos, he determined the shape of Melville Peninsula, and in the second summer discovered the Fury and Hecla Strait leading into the Polar Sea. But the ice-choked condition of this channel, and the dangers of the approach (the *Fury* had been twice spun clean around in an eddy), discouraged further attempts by this route. In 1824-1825 he took the same two ships into Regent's Inlet and traced the east coast of North Somerset as far as Cresswell Bay. Both the *Fury* and *Hecla* were driven ashore, and the *Fury* stayed there. "The only wonder," remarks Parry composedly, "was our long exemption from such a catastrophe." He carefully packed the *Fury's* stores on the beach and brought both crews home in the *Hecla*.

The purpose of Parry's second and third voyages is to be understood by reference to the first. Then he had found his worst obstacles outside the archipelago, in Baffin Bay on the one side, and in the Beaufort Sea on the other; and had concluded that the Passage could best be made by hugging the coast of the mainland from Atlantic to Pacific. Having found on his second voyage that the approach by way of Hudson Strait was made impracticable by Melville Peninsula and the ice to the north of it, he tried the next shortest way by Lancaster Sound and Regent's Inlet. The wreck of the *Fury* spared him the mortification of finding this way interrupted by Boothia Peninsula. Twenty years later Sir John Franklin discovered the true lead west of North Somerset, and perished in following it up.

Parry came no more to the Canadian Arctic. After taking his

stout old *Hecla* to Spitzbergen for an attempt on the North Pole, and setting a farthest north record that was to stand for forty-eight years, he retired from the sea to enjoy a knighthood, administrative employment under the Admiralty, and the character of Elder Statesman among the men of the Arctic. In his latter years he was a member of the Council appointed to direct the search for Sir John Franklin, and having lived just long enough to learn that McClure had made the North West Passage in left-handed fashion by *walking* across the ice stream between Banks Land and Melville Island, he died at a German health resort in 1855.

## Chapter 7



### Franklin's Second Land Journey, 1825-1827

WHILE Parry on his second and third voyages had been failing to equal the success of his first, Franklin, by a fortunate, but relatively uneventful expedition, had greatly improved on his original achievement. He had lost no time in laying before his superiors a plan for further exploration of which they were able to approve, and in 1824, the year in which Parry sailed for Regent's Inlet to attempt the Passage from the east, the Admiralty accepted proposals for mapping the western part of the unknown channel by way of the Mackenzie River. The plan was so framed as to eliminate the worst of the dangers which had so nearly proved fatal to the first land-borne expedition. It was determined for Franklin to winter on Great Bear Lake with four boats' crews—not *voyageurs*, but volunteers from the navy and the merchant service; in the following spring to descend the Mackenzie to its mouth, and there to divide his party, sending two boats to map the coast east to the mouth of the Coppermine, whence the retreat by land to Great Bear Lake was comparatively short and safe, while Franklin himself was to conduct the westerly survey along the Alaskan coast to Cook's Icy Cape. Captain Beechey of the *Blossom* was directed to proceed to Alaska by way of the Pacific, winter in Kotzebue Sound, and in the summer send his barge around Icy Cape to meet and, if necessary, to assist Franklin and his detachment. The latter was given strict orders to turn back between August 15th and 20th, unless he had met the *Blossom's* barge, or was reasonably certain of making Kotzebue Sound before freeze-up.

In all respects the security of this expedition was better as-

sured than that of the previous one. The broad waters of the Mackenzie permitted the use of boats of much sturdier build than the canoes in which Franklin had first braved the Arctic; and the harmony now prevailing in the fur-trade was a guarantee that supplies would be punctually forwarded. As both Richardson and Back obtained leave to accompany their former chief, the young midshipman, Kendall, was the only officer without experience in the duties he was undertaking.

On August the 7th, 1825, the party reached its projected base at the west end of Great Bear Lake and immediately divided: Back remained on the spot to supervise the building of winter quarters (named Fort Franklin), while Richardson explored the east end of the lake and Franklin set off with a boat to survey the lower reaches of the Mackenzie. All detachments were reunited at Fort Franklin by freeze-up, and spent the winter untroubled by the discomforts and bickerings which had added to the difficulties of the first journey. The Hudson's Bay Company officer, Peter Warren Dease, who, with a party of hunters, was attached to the expedition, was a good companion, and Franklin's management of the winter quarters gives the lie to the slander recently current that he was aloof and inhuman in dealing with those under his command. Socially he was not the most adaptable of mortals; but the naval ratings furnished a medium which he understood; he was troubled by no disloyal murmurings; and with a small party he was able in a greater degree than Parry to throw off the normal restraints of discipline: "The hearts and feelings of the whole party were united in one common desire to make the time pass as agreeably as possible." The seamen were divided into four classes and regularly instructed by the officers; at other times all ranks mingled in games in the hall. Relations were so easy that the commander could venture to apologize to a seaman for a temporary reduction in rations, and was rewarded by the gratifying assurance that morale was sound: "Why, sir," said the man, "we never minded the short allowance, but we were fearful of having to use pemmican intended for next summer; we only care about the voyage, and shall be glad when spring comes that we may be off."

On June the 28th the four boats left Fort Franklin to descend the Mackenzie. On arriving at the head of the delta they divided,

Richardson and the midshipman, Kendall, taking the boats *Dolphin* and *Union* to the east, while Franklin and Back with the *Lion* and *Reliance* followed a westerly channel to tide-water, which they reached on the next day.

Here an incident occurred which might have cost the lives of the entire party. A large number of Eskimo tents were seen on an island in the estuary, and Franklin, wishing to make enquiries about the nature of the coast and ice conditions, steered towards them, having first cautioned his men that under no provocation were they to fire without orders from Back or himself. The boats took the ground about a mile from the beach, and the natives, seeing this, came off in their kayaks to the number of three hundred, and being assured by the interpreter Augustus, of the friendly intentions of the white men, closed around the boats and began an active business of barter. Franklin, alarmed at their numbers and importunity, was putting off into deep water when an Eskimo kayak was upset nearby, and its occupant, who was hauled on board the *Lion*, immediately acquainted his countrymen with the treasures it contained. The latter rushed on the boats, and dragged them through deeper water to a shelving beach, and there, despite the remonstrances of their chiefs, began a regular pillage. For some time the struggle continued with remarkable good nature, the natives snatching up articles without offering any violence to those who resisted, while the sailors tried to hold the canvas covers over the cargo and to shove the intruders back with the butt-end of their muskets. As long as the boats were grounded, to have fired, says Franklin, would have been madness, and would have provoked a general massacre. Fortunately Back, with the assistance of a friendly young chief, got the *Reliance* afloat, and seeing that the natives were beginning to threaten the crew of the *Lion* with knives, ordered his men to level their muskets, and threatened to fire. This produced a sudden panic: the Eskimos, well acquainted from their contact with the Indians with the use of firearms, fled back and hid themselves behind the canoes and driftwood on the beach. The *Lion* was refloated, but both boats took the ground again 150 yards from the shore, where they were obliged to remain for the night. The Eskimos, quickly recovering from their panic, were on the point of launching their kayaks when they were deterred

by the warning of Augustus that the first man to approach would be shot. The explorers, though free for the moment from the danger of violence, were left in the most uncomfortable situation imaginable, trapped among shoals from which they knew not how to extricate themselves, and almost within stone's throw of a mob of excited and irritated savages.

They were rescued from this dilemma by the courage and initiative of Augustus. With the rather unwilling consent of Franklin, who feared for his safety, he waded ashore, and soundly rated his countrymen for their behaviour, enlarging on the kindness which the white men had shown his own kinsfolk in the Hudson Bay area, and on the benefits that would accrue if large ships found their way into the Mackenzie. By this speech the volatile savages were moved to expressions of the deepest regret and, on Franklin's earnest admonition, returned the most valuable items of the plunder they had secured, a tent and a large kettle. Friendly relations being thus in a manner restored, Augustus remained on shore to take part in a song and a dance, and had the shrewdness, when suspicion was for a moment asleep, to ascertain that just past midnight the flood tide would permit the boats to escape if they kept close to the western shore. At two in the morning this was achieved, and the party pulled seaward for six miles, until a gale and heavy swell forced it to land.

The episode ended with the comic touch which will intrude itself upon the grimmest of human transactions. In the course of the night, as it subsequently appeared, the less inhibited of the Eskimos succeeded in persuading or overruling their chiefs, who had been opposed to a policy of violence; and it was resolved to massacre the white men and to divide their belongings. Luckily Lieutenant Back, descrying through the mist the whole body of natives paddling towards him, gave the alarm, and the boats were hurriedly launched through the surf. As the Eskimo fleet came into clear view a man in the leading kayak displayed a kettle, crying out that he wished to give it back, and that the "oomiak" (large boat) was full of loot which his penitent countrymen wished to give back. Franklin, greatly embarrassed at the readiness with which the natives responded to his moral exhortations, harshly commanded them to keep their distance, and

when they persisted in their pious design, fired a shot ahead of the foremost kayak; whereupon the Eskimos, after some hesitation, veered round, and at last permitted the explorers to make their escape from that inhospitable shore. History affords no other instance of a father confessor warning off his penitents at the point of a gun.

This affair was the only striking incident in a voyage that was more marked by continuous labour and hardship than by the threat of disaster. The voyage to the west along the north shore of Yukon and Alaska was hampered by the shallowness of the sea, which in places scarcely floated the boats at a distance of four miles from the beach, by continual fogs, and by the perennial ice. Three hundred and forty miles of coast had been laid down in six weeks, when the weather began to display the same alarming symptoms as had occasioned the hurried retreat from Point Turnagain five years before. Though Franklin knew that, if Beechey had been able to carry out his orders, the *Blossom* was by that time in Kotzebue Sound, and her barge on the way around Icy Cape to meet and relieve him, he had no reason to suppose that under the same difficult conditions Beechey's performance would be any better than his own. The legs of several of his men were swollen and inflamed from wading in icy water to launch the boats, so thinking that he "had reached the point beyond which perseverance would be rashness", Franklin gave the order to turn back. His farthest was Return Reef, about longitude 149° W., roughly half-way from the Mackenzie to Icy Cape.

In the meantime the *Blossom's* barge, under the command of an officer named Elson, had rounded Icy Cape and reached Point Barrow, 160 miles west of Return Reef, nine days after Franklin had put about. There Elson was stopped by impenetrable ice, and had not a little trouble in getting clear of the pack and making a safe return to Kotzebue Sound. In the following summer Beechey tried again with even less success; his barge could not get within a hundred miles of Point Barrow. The annoying gap in the chart between this cape and Return Reef was filled in ten years later by the traders Dease and Simpson.

On the return voyage the *Lion* and *Reliance*, built primarily for river navigation and hence not first-rate sea boats, were



caught in a gale on a rocky shore, and just escaped shipwreck by the discovery of a sandy beach below the cliffs. Near the Mackenzie they met a band of friendly Eskimos who, observing that some of the men were footsore from the frequent necessity of tracking the boats along the shingly beach, invited them to stay while they sewed sealskin pads to the soles of their moccasins. From these people they learned of the magnitude of the danger escaped on the outward journey, and also of a plot to waylay and murder them on their return. Actually no further troubles were encountered except those inseparable from navigating the shoal and the uncharted waters of the Mackenzie, but after his difficult and harassing journey it must have been with great relief that on September the 21st Franklin reached his base on Great Bear Lake, whither Richardson had returned some weeks before.

The *Dolphin* and *Union* had reached their objective in a voyage marred only by minor mishaps. Trouble threatened once with the Eskimos, but was promptly avoided by Richardson, who was surer of his route, and with his Scottish caution was less disposed than the ardent Franklin to cultivate friendly relations with the natives. Richardson and Kendall completed the voyage from the Mackenzie to the Coppermine in five weeks, mapped five hundred miles of coast, noted the trend of the south shore of Victoria Island (named by them Wollaston Land), and called the channel which separated it from the mainland Dolphin and Union Strait. Ascending the Coppermine to Bloody Falls, they abandoned their boats and made their way on foot to the east end of Great Bear Lake, where they were met, as had been arranged by the *voyageur* Beaulieu, and carried to Fort Franklin by canoe.

By their combined exertions the members of the expedition had added some eight hundred miles (measured by crow flight) to the known limits of the Polar Sea. The operation, carried out with smoothness, in exact accordance to plan, and with no more hardship than was the common lot of the explorer in those days, is proof of how readily its leader could adjust himself to new conditions, when once those conditions were known. Sir John Franklin was and remains the marine geographer *par excellence* of the North American continent. The sum total of his discoveries, extending roughly from longitude 105° to 150° W., comprised half the Arctic coast of Canada and a considerable

stretch of the Alaskan seaboard. As the trend of the latter to Point Barrow was scarcely a matter of doubt, his achievement had narrowed the search for the North West Passage to the gap between Point Turnagain and Parry's Cresswell Bay in Regent's Inlet. Few would have guessed that nearly thirty years would be required to find the answer to the riddle which the work of eight summers had brought so close to a solution.

## Chapter 8



### John Ross in the Gulf of Boothia, 1829-1833

THE discoveries of Parry and Franklin had, as we have seen, left two gaps in the map of the Arctic shoreline, one of 160 miles in Alaska, and another of roughly 400 miles from Parry's Cresswell Bay to Point Turnagain. There was little doubt about the continuity of the Alaskan coast: it was to the larger blank, just around Canada's troublesome north-east angle, that the attention of British navigators was directed. In 1828 Franklin submitted two plans to the Admiralty, either one of which he volunteered to command. His first proposal was that a ship be sent through Hudson Strait to Repulse Bay, supplies and equipment dragged across the base of Melville Peninsula to the Polar Sea which Parry had found beyond the Strait of Fury and Hecla, and the coast to the westward explored by boat. His other scheme was even more speculative: on his previous journeys he had been told by the Indians of the "Great Fish River" which took its rise in the highlands beyond Slave Lake and flowed north-east to the Arctic; and he now declared his readiness to descend these unknown waters by boat, and from their outlet sail west to Point Turnagain. The Admiralty, however, decided to withdraw for the time being from polar discovery, and both plans were pigeon-holed.

In the meantime a wealthy Londoner, Mr. Felix Booth, was financing a private expedition to be led by another veteran of the Arctic. John Ross was now over fifty years of age, having been born in 1777. He had spent his whole life at sea, and had served in the Baltic during the wars of Napoleon with a distinction which earned him command of the 1818 voyage to Baffin

Bay. There he had made discoveries and observations very useful to the whale fisheries, and had established the reliability of William Baffin at whom, as at Hearne, the Higher Critics of Geography had been carping. Unfortunately, while re-establishing the character of the early Jacobean seaman, he had not a little damaged his own by the unlucky "closing" of Lancaster Sound. John Barrow, Secretary of the Admiralty, who had grudged Ross the command in the first place, never let him forget this. There may have been something in Barrow's contention that Ross's qualifications were those of the mere sailing-master; he lacked the culture of his younger contemporaries; and, though shrewd and widely read, he showed a stubbornness and dogmatism suggestive of a man self-educated in years of maturity, and unused to the give and take of collegiate life. His positive qualities were courage, enterprise, and the tremendous vitality which carried him through the cruise on which he was now embarking and subsequently permitted him to take command of a discovery ship at the age of seventy-two.

Ross lacked neither the originality nor the resolution to put his ideas to the test. He had made up his mind that Parry had been handicapped by the size of his ships, and therefore chose for his cruise the little *Victory*, which, when fully laden, displaced only 150 tons and drew seven feet of water (the *Fury* had drawn eighteen). As a further precaution he equipped her with auxiliary engine and paddle-wheels, the latter capable of being hoisted up to avoid contact with the ice. While not acknowledging his deficiency in any science useful to the explorer, Ross was careful to choose his second-in-command from the more scholarly group of young officers which the scientific revolution was producing, and gave the appointment to his nephew, James Clark Ross, who had been with Parry on all his voyages and was now about to enter the Arctic Circle for the sixth time. His plan was to follow the course taken by Parry in 1824, enter Regent's Inlet, steer for the mainland, and coast westward, relying on the stores of the wrecked *Fury* in case of detention.

The *Victory* had a rough passage to Greenland and through Lancaster Sound. Off North Somerset she was caught in dark and tempestuous weather, and barely escaped shipwreck. "At two

o'clock in the morning, a heavy pack of ice, which had been concealed from us in the fog, suddenly made its appearance at three cables length under our lee, being then only recognized by the tremendous breakers surging over it." The mate, Blanky, who was in charge, wore ship, and in going about struck a piece of loose ice with such violence that it jarred the head of the light-weight *Victory* several points to windward, and permitted her to weather the ice by a ship's length. In his daily journal the usually self-centred and unemotional Ross praises the "care and ability" of Blanky with a warmth which is a measure of the fright he had suffered.

Fury Point was reached on August the 12th. Of the wreck, which had been ground up by ice and tide, not a trace remained; but her stores were found securely stacked on the beach much as Parry had left them. After being laden with all the supplies she could hold, the *Victory* continued her course across Cresswell Bay, past Cape Garry, the ultimate point on Parry's chart, and entered the region of original discovery.

Ross had entered Regent's Inlet on the supposition that North Somerset, which bounded it on the west, was an island, separated from the continent by a strait which would give him access to the "Western Sea" and the region explored by Franklin and Richardson. He therefore kept the land close aboard, and on August the 15th was deep in the bay by which the east end of Bellot Strait is approached, and very close to the object of his search. Under favourable conditions he might have found it, but a vast crescent of close-packed ice choked up the bottom of the bay; from a distance Ross could see no trace of a break in the shoreline (Bellot Strait is only a mile across at its narrowest point), so the dogged but unlucky old seaman followed the visible trend of the coast to the SSE., and, missing his one chance, committed himself to the *impasse* of Boothia Gulf.

For the next six weeks Ross struggled on, vexed incessantly by those dangers and setbacks which were the commonplace of Arctic navigation in the days of sail, and on October the 1st, after making a bare 150 miles of southing from Bellot Strait, he berthed his ship in Felix Harbour, a little to the north-east of the narrows of the Boothia Isthmus. The usual preparations for winter were made, stores were removed to the beach

to allow more room for the crew on board, and the engine, which had proved a total failure and an intolerable nuisance (Ross had paid the penalty which falls to the lot of most pioneers) was dismantled and flung on the beach. A school was organized to give the men instruction in reading, religion, and navigation, a "Programme of Studies" which the honest but eccentric captain varied by an occasional lecture on "Total Abstinence".

Early in the New Year Eskimos visited the ship and established the good relations which lasted with little interruption throughout the expedition, and proved of great service to the explorers both in procuring food and in conducting summer journeys. These people, like the natives met by Parry on the other side of Melville Peninsula, were intelligent and well informed on topography. They assured Ross that he had entered a blind alley from which (with the doubtful exception of Fury and Hecla Strait) there was no exit except by the way he had come. They drew for him with what proved to be a high degree of accuracy a map of the southern end of the Gulf of Boothia and Committee Bay, linking his discoveries with those made by Parry on his Hudson Bay voyage of 1821-1823. The truth of this information, as far as the Isthmus of Boothia was concerned, was proved by a journey which James Ross made to the south in April; and as the Eskimos knew nothing of Bellot Strait, the explorers concluded that they could hope for no further progress by sea, and that their future discoveries must be restricted to those regions which could be reached by journeys on foot. Preparations for these were immediately begun and, under the instruction of the Eskimos, sledges were made for the transport of enough supplies to support a small party during a prolonged absence from its base.

On May the 15th, 1830, the younger Ross set out for the west on an expedition which, though unmarred by any serious mishap, was to contribute indirectly to the worst disaster of polar history. Taking with him five men and two sledges, one manhandled and the other drawn by Eskimo dogs, he crossed the narrows of Boothia Isthmus, took to the sea ice beyond, and skirted the north shore of Matty Island. He could not determine whether the land visible to the south was continuous. "When all is ice," he observes, "and all one dazzling mass of white, when

the surface of the sea itself is tossed up and fixed into rocks, while the land is on the contrary, often very flat, if not level, . . . it is not always so easy a problem." Leaving this question to be settled on the return journey, he struck west from Matty Island to the coast of King William Land, and traced it to its northernmost point which he named Cape Felix. Here he noted that "the pack of ice which had, in the autumn of the last year, been pressed against the shore, consisted of the heaviest masses that I had ever seen in such a situation. With this the lighter floes had been thrown up, on some parts of the coast, in the most extraordinary and incredible manner; turning up large quantities of the shingle before them, and, in some places, having travelled as much as half a mile beyond the limits of the highest tide-mark". He had in fact found the end of the great ice-stream from the Beaufort Sea which Parry had encountered near its source at Melville Island and found to be impassable.

Though young Ross noted with excitement that the coast fell away from Cape Felix in a south-westerly trend, which would conduct him to the Point Turnagain of Franklin (now barely 250 miles away), he hesitated to proceed as provisions were low, and the sledge crew exerting itself beyond its strength, until informed that it was the wish of the men to submit to reduced rations in order to make the furthest progress possible. He was thus enabled to extend his journey down the west shore of King William Land to Point Victory, where he marked his "farthest" by building a cairn and displaying the flag. With cruel but unconscious irony he named two headlands to the south Franklin and Jane Franklin. Seventeen years later Franklin, caught in the deadly grip of the ice-stream, was to die within sight of those capes, and the only record of his fate which has come to light was found on Point Victory, near "Sir James Ross's pillar".

Despite the shortage of rations the resolute young explorer lengthened his return journey and made a detour to the south of Matty Island to confirm his belief that King William Land was connected with the Isthmus of Boothia. Through "a thin haze which covered the land" he was able to distinguish Cape Colville on the eastern shore reaching towards the opposite headland of Mount Mathison, and was deceived by the poor visibility into

supposing that the two promontories actually met and that he was looking south into a closed bay. It was the error thus introduced into his chart which in 1846 was to divert Sir John Franklin from the relative safety of Rae Strait into the ice-choked waters which lay to the west of King William Land.

Owing to the time-lag in the break-up of heavy masses of ice, navigation in the Arctic begins only when the summer is well past its peak: the Rosses, like Parry at Winter Harbour, had to wait until August before attempting to free their ship and return home. They had not Parry's luck: the ice never fully broke up, and after a long but ineffective struggle they were again frozen in four miles from their previous anchorage. In May and June of the ensuing year (1831) James Ross again crossed the Isthmus and, travelling up its western shore, determined as accurately as his instruments permitted the location of the north magnetic pole. By this discovery he justified a costly, laborious, and otherwise relatively fruitless voyage, and enabled his uncle to return home with the assurance that he had atoned for the unlucky error of 1818.

Two years were to elapse before this success could be reported. In September, after wrestling unsuccessfully with floes that would not disperse, the *Victory* was again icebound; and in the spring of 1832 the members of her crew were reduced to the desperate expedient of making their escape by boat. They tramped the two hundred miles to Fury Beach, repaired the boats which Parry had left there, and sailed to the top of Regent's Inlet. There they found Barrow Strait ice-jammed and, after a weary and disappointing vigil, went back to Fury Beach for the winter. The next summer, their fifth in the Arctic, was kinder to them: in late September they finally made their way from the Inlet into the track of the Greenland whalers, were picked up and brought home to a country which had given them up for dead.

Though the Ross voyage had not much advanced the search for the North West Passage, it marked a critical point in the quest. The opinion was later expressed by Sir Leopold McClintock that the only navigable route was by way of Peel Sound (or Bellot Strait), to the east of King William Land, through Ross and



Rae Straits, into Simpson Strait, and so west; for only thus could the polar ice-stream be avoided. The twentieth century has proved that the latter is not an insuperable obstacle, but in terms of sailing ships McClintock's judgement was doubtless correct: the Passage could only be made by passing to *the left of Cape Felix*, using King William Island as a shield against the polar ice pressing in from the north-west. Hence James Ross's error in closing the life-saving corridor between Boothia Isthmus and the island had the disastrous effect of diverting the Franklin expedition to *the right* into the ice-choked channel which it ought, at all costs, to have avoided. Two opportunities were missed of correcting the chart before it was too late. In 1834 Back spent three weeks in the estuary of the Great Fish River in fruitless endeavours to penetrate the ice to the west when open water was beckoning him to the north; and in 1839 Thomas Simpson reached Cape Britannia below the south end of Rae Strait, but was prevented by poor visibility and the lateness of the season from observing that the Poetess Bay of James Ross was no bay but the open strait afterwards discovered and named by John Rae.

Nor does this complete the list of errors and omissions associated with the region. After the disappearance of Franklin, Captain Kennedy, commander of a rescue ship, discovered Bellot Strait, but against the advice of his second-in-command, Lieutenant Bellot of the French Navy, turned north, when south would have conducted him to the scene of the disaster. Again in 1853 Captain Collinson, when he found time and resources insufficient for examining both sides of Victoria Strait, chose to search its western shore, so missing his objective and leaving it to Rae and McClintock to discover all that will ever be known of the disaster which Ross's mistake had helped to bring about.

In justice to James Ross it should be noted that he entered Poetess Bay on his map with the conjectural dotted line, expressing belief only, not positive assertion that land existed where he showed it.

## Chapter 9



### Back on the Great Fish River, 1833-1835

ON their arrival in England in October 1833, John and James Ross learned that their "ancient and tried friend, Back", had sailed eight months previously to bring them help overland from Canada. Early in 1832 projects had been aired for the rescue of the *Victory's* crew, already absent for nearly three years; and these included a proposal, put forward by Dr. Richardson, that a party should proceed eastward from Great Slave Lake and bring relief to the castaways by way of the Great Fish River (Thlew-ee-choh-desseth), which, though totally unexplored and known only by the vague report of the Indians, would, it was believed, bring the rescuers to a point on the Arctic coast some three hundred miles from the wreck of the *Fury*. When this plan failed to win the approval of the government, Mr. George Ross, brother of John and father of James, with the assistance of a number of scientists and sailors, arranged to carry it out by means of a private expedition. As Richardson, originally designated as leader of the enterprise, failed to obtain leave from the Admiralty, the command was entrusted to Back, who had hurried home from Italy on the first rumour of a fresh polar journey. With some help from the government, enough funds were raised to finance him for two years; the Hudson's Bay Company undertook to furnish personnel and supplies. In February 1833 Back sailed for New York, with the gifted but eccentric Dr. Richard King as surgeon-naturalist, and three other men, two of whom were ship's carpenters. The rest of the party were to be recruited on the spot.

Back's instructions directed him to make his way to Montreal and thence, by the usual route of the fur-traders, to the eastern

end of Great Slave Lake. There he was to set up his headquarters; and while some of his men were building a winter dwelling he was to locate the source of the Great Fish River, return to pass the winter at his base; and in the ensuing summer (1834) he was to descend the river with two boats, built by the carpenters on the spot but capable of navigating the Polar Sea, and make every effort to find and relieve the Ross expedition. Since the fitness of the Fish River for navigation could be judged only from the decidedly unfavourable report of the Indians, and from Back's conjecture that, as it descended to the ocean from the same level as the Coppermine, it must, like the latter river, be beset with falls and rapids; and since on reaching tide-water the relieving force would still be separated from its objective by several hundred miles of land, water, ice, or all three, one suspects that the men of science who formed the backbone of the organizing committee were not very hopeful of success, but seized the opportunity of carrying out by public subscription an enterprise which, even though it failed in its declared purpose, was certain to add to geographical knowledge. With this end in view they instructed Back that, should the Ross party return unexpectedly, he was to sail west from the Fish River and link its mouth with the Point Turnagain of Franklin.

At Montreal Back enrolled some of his *voyageurs*, and three men of the 6th Battalion of the Royal Artillery. He then continued his journey west by way of the Ottawa River and the lakes to Fort Alexander on Lake Winnipeg. Here he met his old acquaintance, George Simpson, now governor of the Company's posts; and both men must have smiled at the recollection of their peevish exchanges at Chipewyan thirteen years before. From Simpson Back learned that another old friend, the factor A. R. McLeod, had been given command of the hunters attached to the expedition. The party now proceeded by way of Lake Winnipeg, and one regrets to learn from the leader's journal that, having himself become a seasoned Westerner, he was so inhuman as to derive not a little amusement from the torments inflicted by the mosquitoes on his companion, Dr. King. "He rose in the morning with features so changed that it was difficult to recognize the friend of the preceding night." On the westward journey Back was joined by Mr. McLeod, and with him made his way to

Fort Resolution, a trading post on the south shore of Great Slave Lake. Here, in conformity with his instructions, he divided his command, dispatching Mr. McLeod to build a winter house at the east end of the lake with one detachment, while he prepared to locate the source of the Great Fish River with the other.

The Fish River expedition is the least celebrated of the polar journeys of that period. The return of the Ross party robbed it of its chief objective; it failed to achieve its secondary purpose; and the region it traversed is the most barren and uninteresting of the Canadian sub-continent. Yet this does not lessen the credit due to Back for the persistence and good humour he displayed in groping his way through hundreds of miles of lake, rock, and forest to find the headwaters of a river of the very existence of which he had no positive assurance. He left Fort Resolution on August the 12th, and a week later, at the north-east end of the lake, arrived at the mouth of the Hoar Frost River, which Maufelly, the Indian guide, directed him to ascend. The stream proved to be a "series of appalling cascades and rapids", where the labour of portaging was aggravated by intense heat and swarms of mosquitoes. These difficulties and the haunting fear of failure could not quell the artist in Back: "High rocks beetling over the rapids like towers, or rent into the most diversified forms, gay with various coloured mosses, or shaded by overhanging trees—now a tranquil pool, lying like a sheet of silver—now the dash and foam of a cataract—these are only a part of its striking and picturesque features." After they had toiled upstream for several days Maufelly confessed himself at a loss—they were not on the right river. A tedious portage was made eastward to another stream, which was ascended to Clinton-Colden Lake; thence a short passage led into Aylmer Lake; a low ridge to the north was crossed—the height of land as it proved—and Back found himself again on the Barren Lands, where twelve years before his adventurous career had so nearly terminated. Skirting the shores of a little lake to which he gave the name of Sussex, he came upon a rivulet emptying from it and apparently flowing to the north. It flashed upon him that here perhaps was the object of his search, and this opinion was confirmed a few hours later by a party of his hunters returning from the chase. A few days' survey satisfied Back as to the size of the

river on which he had stumbled, though it could furnish no final assurance as to its course or outlet to the sea. His progress was cut short by a series of rapids which the canoe was too weak to run and too rickety to be carried over. He re-traversed the chain of lakes by which he had come, added Artillery Lake to his list of discoveries, and joined Mr. McLeod at Fort Reliance, the newly established base on Great Slave Lake.

The winter proved more trying than had been expected. Game was scarce; and Back was obliged to break into his reserve of pemmican to an extent which jeopardized the forthcoming expedition. Akaitcho, whose tribesmen had again been hired as hunters, exerted himself to the utmost for the friend whose life he had once saved: "It is better," said the old chief, "that ten Indians should perish than that one white man should suffer through our negligence and breach of faith." The winter furnished another and more melancholy instance of the loyalty of the natives towards their white employers. Augustus, the Eskimo interpreter, on hearing that Back was again in the North, set out from Hudson Bay in the depth of winter to join him. He had all but completed his journey when he was caught in a blizzard on an open stretch of lake and frozen to death. "Such was the miserable end of poor Augustus"—who had followed Franklin on both his land journeys, and in the second by his courage and initiative had perhaps been the means of saving the entire party.

In April dispatches arrived from England by Hudson's Bay Company courier, containing the news of the rescue of the Ross party, and also a chart of the discoveries it had effected on and around the Isthmus of Boothia. Back was doubly pleased, for, besides being relieved of anxiety for his friend, James Ross, his administrative task was lightened as, having now no ends but those of exploration to serve, he was enabled to travel with a smaller party and make the voyage to the Arctic with one boat instead of two.

In early June Mr. McLeod, who was to assist the expedition as far as the head waters of the Fish River, left the fort with a few hunters to kill and cache game for the main party, while Back and King busied themselves with securing valuables which must be left behind. On the 7th they also set out and commenced the laborious task of dragging boat and supplies up frozen water-

courses, across lakes, and over the height of land to the point where their voyage was to begin. The feat of the naval carpenters in constructing in the primeval forest and with those tools merely which they had brought with them a boat "capable of navigating the Polar Sea" must be acknowledged as remarkable; hardly less so was that of their comrades in hauling a burden of several tons by a circuitous route to Musk Ox Lake (the point where the Fish River became navigable), where they met Mr. McLeod and received the provisions he had gathered.

Parting from McLeod on July the 4th, Back and his crew crossed the ice of Musk Ox Lake and launched out on the river which "flowing from the lake, cut through a chain of craggy rocks and mountains, thickly strewn with boulders and *débris*, but with sufficient pasturage in the valleys and down the declivities to attract the musk oxen and the deer". A range of mountains visible to the west was named after "my late lamented friend Captain Peter Heywood, R.N.". This was the very Heywood who, as a midshipman, had narrowly escaped hanging for his alleged share in the mutiny of the *Bounty*, and the reference affords an interesting link between Back's generation and the older group of discoverers associated with the names of Cook and Vancouver.

While encamped that evening Back was surprised to receive a visit from Akaitcho, who happened to be lodging a little distance away. His friends had tried to dissuade the frail old man from the exertion, but he replied: "I have known the chief for a long time, and I am afraid that I shall never see him again—I will go." With the mixture of deference and patronage which marked his relations with the white men, he warned Back of the dangers of the river and of the Eskimos, reminded him of his dreadful experiences on the Coppermine, and implored him not to go where there would be no Copper Indians at hand to rescue him. Back replied that nothing could happen without the permission of the Great Spirit, in whose keeping he was as safe as if he had a score of boats, and bade his kind old friend farewell.

The party now consisted of twelve: Back and King, three artillerymen, and seven *voyageurs*, Scottish and half-breed. To complete the journey to the mouth of the river, and thence to Point Turnagain, scarcely six weeks were available, for Back's orders required him to turn back not later than August the 20th.

He had not progressed far when he discovered that Akaitcho had not exaggerated the dangers of the river. Columns of mist appeared in the distance, rising at intervals, and soon "a still sheet of water brought us to a long and appalling rapid, full of rocks and large boulders; the sides hemmed in by a wall of ice, and the current flying with the force and velocity of a torrent". The boat was lightened of her cargo, and the rapids safely run.

On July the 11th and 12th they were detained by a gale accompanied by rain, for the mist and spray concealed the rocks with which the watercourse was studded. The 13th was hazy with showers, but Back's impatience would brook no further delay. A short traverse brought him to Lake Beechey, which formed a sharp angle with the course of the river, and stretched away to the south-east, reviving the fear that not the Arctic but Chesterfield Inlet was the goal towards which they were tending. Ice at the lower end of the lake held the party up for two days, and when this barrier was at last penetrated, the exit was found to be an awful series of cascades. The gloomy report of the men was that the boat "might be got down, but they did not see how she could ever be got up again". The stalwart Back replied that if anything went wrong they were still within walking distance of Fort Reliance; the descent was tried and safely effected. A northerly trend in the river brought them to rapids so formidable as to cause uneasiness and muttering among the men; but Back, with no assertion of authority, won their good-humoured consent to the attempt. "As we entered the defile, the rocks on the right hand presented a high and perpendicular front, so slaty and regular that it needed no force of imagination to suppose them severed at one blow from the opposite range; which, craggy, broken, and overhanging, towered in stratified and many coloured masses above the chafing torrent." Below these rapids the river trended again to the north and broadened out into Lake Pelly, whence a short channel conducted into the broad and irregular expanse of Lake Garry.

In a small lake the impetus of the inflowing water caused a current which served as a pointer to the outlet, but here this friendly guide was soon lost, and the patient boatmen pried into several bays without success; "the unwelcome glare of ice was also seen". This proved to be a mass undisturbed since winter;

and the disheartened crew muttered that they would have to wait until it melted. Back replied: "We must see what old *voyageurs* can do"—concealing with admirable tact that he had descried a possible lead through his telescope, and leaving to his guides the pride and merit of the discovery. "They were zealous and hearty in the cause," he assures his readers, "and a hindrance was evidently painful to them." A passage was eventually forced by use of the axe and some portaging.

Emerging from Lake Garry and crossing Lake McDougall, the party found itself at the head of another rapid where its chief outdoes himself in the power of his description. "The space occupying the centre from the first descent to the island was full of rocks of unequal heights over which the rapid foamed and boiled and rushed with impetuous and deadly fury. At that part it was raised into an arch; while the sides were yawning and cavernous, swallowing huge masses of ice, and then again tossing the splintered fragments high in the air." It was impossible to carry the boat down the portage; she was lightened and made the descent with some hard knocks but no substantial damage. The river now swung definitely to the north; and at the lower end of Lake Franklin the Eskimos were encountered.

These were met at the top of a rapid which the party was surveying, prior to making the descent. It was an anxious moment, for the explorers issued from a quarter whence the Eskimos had learned to expect "only the scourge of merciless warfare". Back approached them throwing out his hands and crying "tima" ("peace") to which overtures the natives made a like response. After confirming friendly relations by the gift of fish-hooks and beads, Back began to question the natives by means of the dialect he had picked up on the Mackenzie. He learned that he was only a day's sailing from salt water, and that his friends knew of Sir Edward Parry's visit to Regent's Inlet, but not of the Ross expedition.

At the foot of the rapids the explorers parted from these friendly folk, and hurried on with renewed hopes. On the afternoon of the following day they came upon a broad channel, stretching away to the north and terminated in the extreme distance by the loom of a massive promontory, "which had a coast-like appearance" (Victoria Headland). "This may be considered



as the mouth of the Thlew-ee-choh, which after a violent and tortuous course of 530 geographical miles, running through an iron-ribbed country without a single tree on the whole line of its banks, expanding into fine large lakes, most embarrassing to the navigator, and broken into falls, cascades, and rapids to the number of no less than eighty-three, pours its waters into the Polar Sea in latitude  $67^{\circ} 11' 0''$  N., and longitude  $94^{\circ} 30' 0''$  W." It was now July the 29th, and the journey from Musk Ox Lake had taken twenty-five days. The explorers were separated from Point Turnagain by less than half the distance they had travelled in descending the river.

Back's first emotion on reaching salt water was a joyous anticipation of "a prosperous issue of our voyage westward within ten days", the linking of the mouth of the Fish River with Point Turnagain, and the near completion of the map of the North American Arctic coast. But the success which he so well merited was denied him. As the estuary expanded the party became aware of continuous pack to the front and to their left, and Back perceived that he had entered the bottom of a deep inlet, choked with ice, which only a strong west wind could remove. He set to work cautiously to make his way through this barrier, as few liberties could be taken with such an obstacle in a frail and damaged boat. On August the 1st the party landed on what they supposed to be the western shore of the inlet, but the next day revealed it to be an island, to which Back, in memory of hospitalities received in the Canadian city, gave the name of Montreal—a place twenty years later to win a mournful celebrity as being perhaps the "farthest south" of the survivors of Franklin's starving crews. Though repeatedly imprisoned by the ice which lay close inshore, the boat's crew worked their way down the west side of the estuary to its termination in Point Ogle, and mapped it with such accuracy as intermittent rain and fog permitted. From its mouth Back and King saw the land fading away to the north-east and reappearing more directly to the north. They did not know that the latter, the King William Land of James Ross, was a separate island, and that they were actually looking at the south end of Rae Strait, the key to the North West Passage. In that quarter the sea lay open, and King, it would appear, urged his commander to disregard orders which it seemed

impossible to obey, and, since the west was barred, to sail north and make a further survey of Boothia. But Back had James Ross's chart in his pocket, and was unwilling merely to supplement that officer's discoveries when a change in the wind might move the ice and open up an entirely new field of exploration. So, being unable to round Point Ogle, he dragged his boat across the sandy neck which formed the base of that peninsula, only to find himself again ice-imprisoned in the bay formed by Points Ogle and Richardson. The accident of geography had brought him to the place that will always be associated with his former commander: just beyond Point Richardson lay the little inlet later to be known as Starvation Cove. But Back's progress in this dismal region had come to an end. The ice refused to yield; the weather was foggy, cold, and wet; the morale as well as the health of the men began to give way. On August the 14th he issued orders for an immediate return. He had only carried out his instructions by persisting for two weeks in a vain endeavour, but in later years the gallant sailor must have reflected bitterly that had he used the discretion which no one would have grudged him and, when he found the passage to the west blocked, sailed north, he might have discovered Rae Strait, corrected the chart of James Ross, and permitted Franklin to avoid the ice trap from which not one of his men was to escape alive. This subaltern tameness was later severely criticized by Dr. King, and it must always be a matter of regret that Back's effort, however valuable in itself, added nothing to the map of the ocean lane which it had been his life's work to trace.

The return voyage proved easier than the anxious travellers had expected. In the late summer the river was free from ice, and the force and depth of its current diminished. The explorers were met by Mr. McLeod at Musk Ox Lake and spent the winter with him at Fort Reliance. In the early spring the commander left King to wind up the affairs of the expedition and hurried home by way of New York to make his report and prepare his journal for publication.

Back's knowledge of Indian and Eskimo dialects, his habit of conversing freely with the natives as an affable "Great Chief", as well as his artist's eye for a landscape, and his gift of vivid description, make the *Narrative of the Arctic Land Expedition*

to the Mouth of the Great Fish River one of the most readable books of travel, despite its poverty of incident. But the author must have been not a little chagrined by the appearance somewhat later of a rival *Narrative* in which Dr. King accused his former commander of various grave faults, namely, poor discipline in conversing too freely with the men, imposing on his second-in-command, and want of initiative during the critical days spent in the Fish River estuary. Though his charges were not altogether without foundation, it was foolish of King to suppose that a young amateur could, without supporting evidence, pass sentence on an officer of Back's rank and reputation; but his *naïveté* did not end there. He went on to propose another polar expedition to be commanded by himself, explaining gravely why he hoped to succeed where "a Parry, a Franklin, and a Back" had failed; though on his own showing his special qualifications were confined to the training obtained under the officer whom he criticized so harshly. Naturally the subscriptions which he solicited were not forthcoming—the wealthy patrons of discovery were also, for the most part, friends of Back—and the only effect of his ill-judged publication was that twelve years later, when he alone was right and the polar experts wrong on a problem of vital importance, his opinion was spurned as that of a crank.

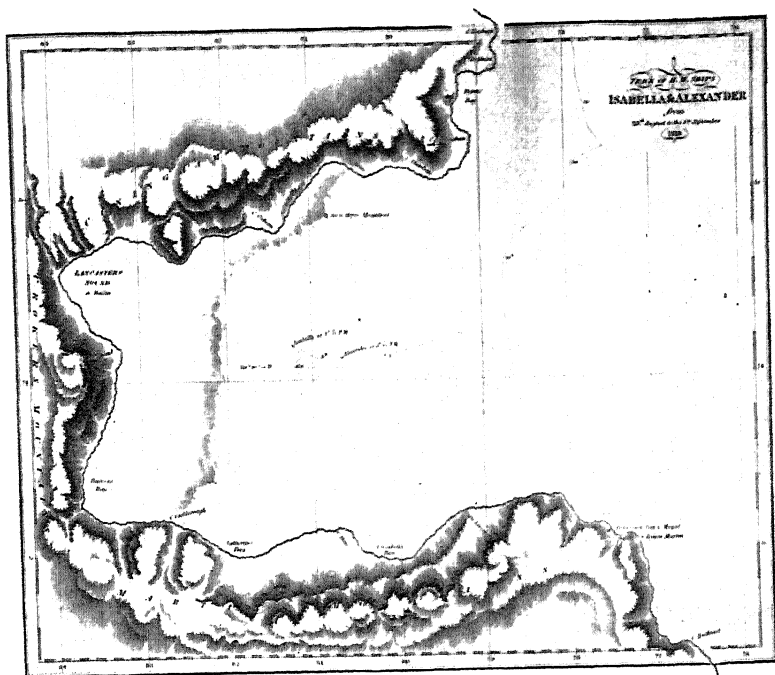


## The "Terror" in Hudson Bay, 1836-1837

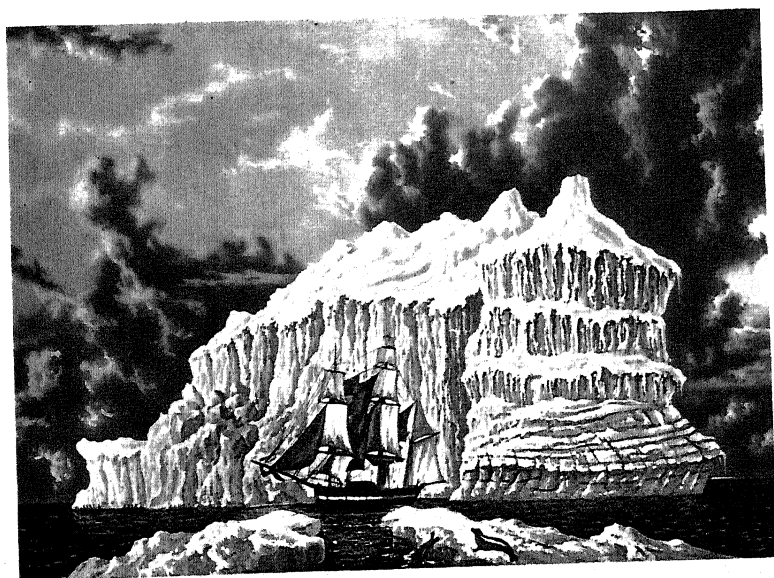
THE journeys of Ross and Back had the effect of reviving official interest in polar discovery; and it was resolved to put into execution a plan drawn up some years before by Sir John Franklin, namely to send a ship through Hudson Strait to Wager or Repulse Bay, drag boats across the base of Melville Peninsula, and with them explore to the west. The 340-ton *Terror* was commissioned for this service, and sailed in 1836 with Back in command. As first lieutenant he had William Smyth, a South American traveller of note; and as mates, Graham Gore and Robert McClure, who were later to establish rival claims as discoverers of the North West Passage.

The voyage, which contributed nothing to discovery, is made memorable by Back's graphic description of the dangers endured, and by the sketches of unusual vividness which Lieutenant Smyth prepared for his captain's *Narrative*. Seahorse Point, the easternmost extremity of Southampton Island, was sighted on August the 15th, and the *Terror's* head was laid north-west along the course which Bylot and Baffin had followed two centuries before. From there on she was in continual trouble with ice masses setting in the opposite direction, and, after making a bare 150 miles in five weeks, was frozen in off Bylot's Cape Comfort. As a helpless prisoner she began the south-easterly drift which must rank with McClure's voyage around Banks Land as one of the most nerve-racking cruises which the polar explorer has lived to report.

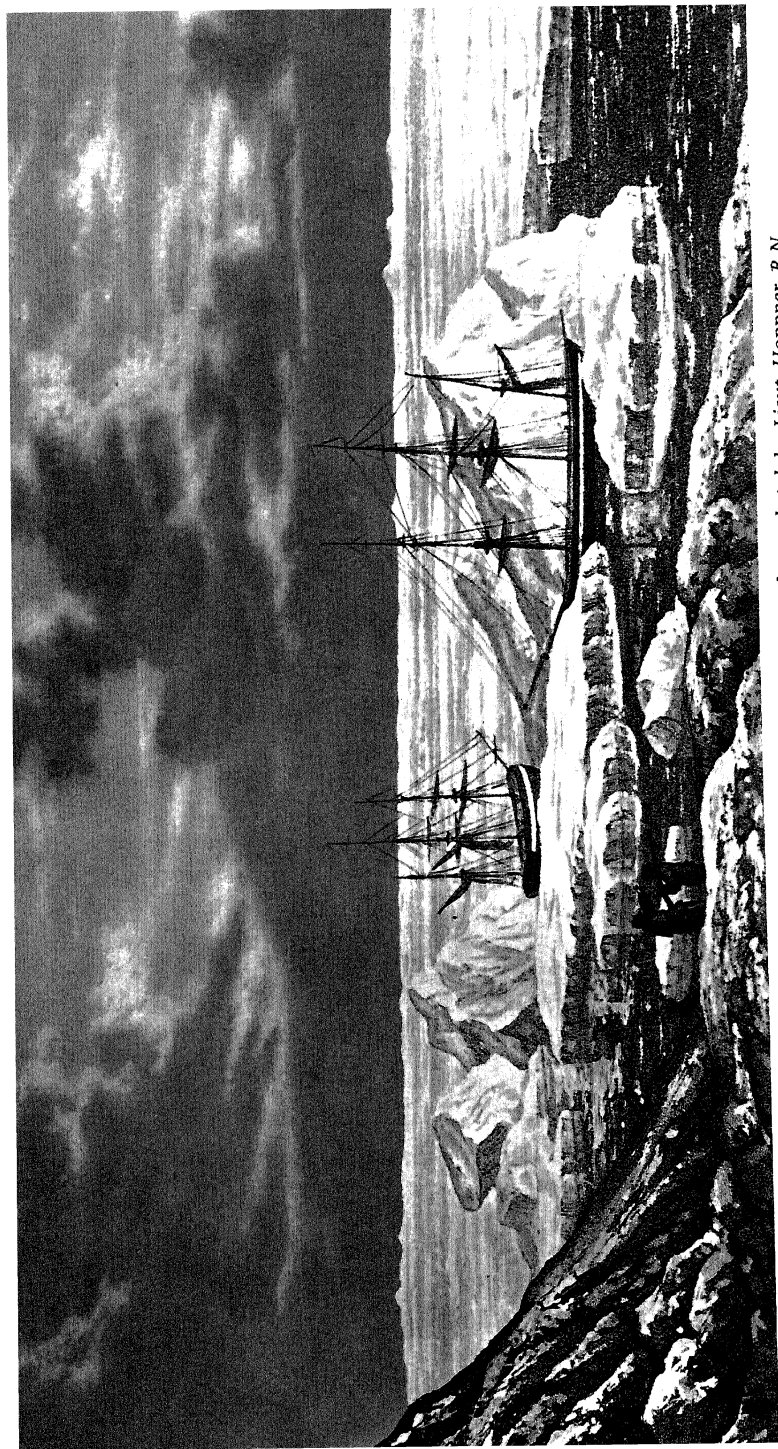
The *Terror* was beset on September the 20th, and within a few days her crew received a foretaste of the dangers which were to threaten them for nine months. "Shortly after 9 a.m. a floe



Map of Ross's first voyage showing the supposed Crokers Mountains, "a range of mountains where no mountains existed..."



Iceberg in Baffin's Bay, from a sketch by Lieut. Beechey, R.N., July 1819.



*The Hecla and the Gripper at "Parry's farthest", August the 17th, 1820, after a sketch by Lieut. Hoppner, R.N.*

split in two, and the extreme violence of the pressure curled and crumbled the windward ice in an awful manner. . . . The ship creaked as it were in agony, and, strong as she was, must have been stove and crushed, had not some of the smaller masses been forced under her bottom, and so diminished the strain by actually lifting her bow nearly two feet out of the water." The pressure continued, and the wind, blowing fresh on the outer edge of the pack, squeezed a wall of ice into the air within fifty paces of the weather beam. "Symptoms too unequivocal to be misunderstood demonstrated the intensity of the pressure. The butt-ends began to start, and the copper, in which the galley apparatus was fixed, became creased, and leaks found access through the boltheads and bulls-eyes." Pumps were set going, and provisions brought on deck, to be thrown on the ice, if necessary.

After some hours the pressure relaxed, and on the following day the *Terror* righted. Greenland whalers among the crew declared that they had never seen the ship that would have stood such a strain. On the 27th she was nipped again, and her bow split; four days later she righted in a field of ice which the increasing cold had frozen into a solid mass. The best that her crew could now hope for was that the floe would remain intact until the next summer. The upper masts were sent down, a housing erected, and the decks banked with snow. Stoves were set up, and vapours carried off by an intricate system of pipes, which, at a distance, gave the ship "the appearance of a factory".

For about a month the ship remained almost stationary and undisturbed. On November the 10th, however, the ice grew restless and began to drift her to the eastward past Cape Comfort. On the 20th some force, possibly a remote gale working on the ice to seaward, drove the ship close in shore "where the bay ice was still in tumultuous agitation, having been thrown up against the rocks in some shelving places to a height of thirty or forty feet . . . No art could save us, if we were once exposed to the grinding pressure of the mass against the rocks". To seaward masses of floe had been flung up to such a height that, with the interstices filled with snow, they resembled an iceberg. From its summit Back looked down on to the maintop of the *Terror*, and very small and helpless she must have appeared with the iron-bound coast on the one hand and the encroaching pack on the

other. Frightful convulsions in the ice, which heaved it up in some places, caused great rents in others from which "the vapour streamed forth in as great a volume, and nearly as dense as the smoke". At a temperature of forty-three below a sailor fell into the water, which was fifteen above, and found the sensation pleasurable. So ignorant was he of his danger that, had not his rescuer, McClure, hustled him off to the ship, he would have lingered and frozen to death.

Early in January a heavy gale drove the ship forty-five miles to the east, but left her protecting floe still intact. On February the 20th she withstood a terrific onset. The pressure split the floe right up to the ship, and threatened her with total destruction. Extra shores, set up by the carpenter, were squeezed from position and thrown down, the door of the captain's cabin was split, and beads of turpentine started from every seam. "The people, in alarm, crowded on deck; and even the poor sick came tottering aft in an agony of terror." Temporary relief was obtained when the ship heaved up eight inches; and Back took the opportunity to lecture the crew on their duty "as Christians and British seamen" to stand by their comrades, especially the sick. Extra clothing and food was piled on the deck, and the boats were slung high to secure them in the event of the ship being thrown on her broadside. She continued in motion, and it was feared that she was being forced towards the land, though the dense clouds of "frost-smoke", which rose from rents in the ice, left the officers in most disturbing uncertainty as to their exact position. Back preached a sermon on the text, "It is the Lord: let Him do what seemeth Him good", and was heard "with the most profound and serious attention".

Since November the *Terror* had been drifting slowly and with occasional set-backs down the coast of Southampton Island, and was approaching open water where the pressure might be expected to be less intense. On the night of March the 15th, however, she was again badly nipped in a gale, her keel cracked, her stern-post split and forced over three feet to larboard. She began to leak, and though the water was easily kept down by the pumps, there was no telling what might happen when the pressure relaxed. For the moment she was securely cradled in her floe, and so elevated that the carpenter was able to repair the



forefoot. The lower stern-post was too much weakened to support the rudder, but that universal handyman, Lieutenant Smyth, devised a method for suspending it from a higher point.

As the ice broke up in early summer northerly winds carried the *Terror* clear of Southampton Island down towards the Ungava coast with her protecting floe still around her. With the coming of July orders were given to saw this off and bring the ship under control. By a natural oversight, allowance was not made for the mass of ice which had been jammed under the ship's bottom by successive pressures, held there by the weight of the floe above, and only awaiting its removal to float up to the surface. When in a light swell the ship apparently shook loose, the crew cheered, but "the cheering was turned to astonishment, as they watched the ship slowly rising and heeling over to port . . . Then it was that we beheld the strange and appalling spectacle of what may fitly be called a submerged berg, fixed low down with one end to the ship's side, while the other, with the purchase of a long lever, advantageously placed at right angles to the keel, was slowly rising towards the surface. Meanwhile, those who happened to be below, finding everything falling, rushed or clambered on deck, where they saw the ship on her beam-ends, with the lee boats touching the water, and felt that a few moments only trembled between them and eternity". Yet there was no confusion or panic: the men engaged in pumping continued at their stations, while their comrades lowered the boats, filled them with clothing and provisions, and veered them astern, clear of danger. Back and Smyth rowed around the ship; fourteen planks were visible to starboard; to port the captain stepped from the boat's gunwale to the ship's deck. At that time the carpenter held his peace; he afterwards told Back that the pressure on the centre of the keel had sprung the deck up amidships, and would have broken the back of any ship but the *Terror*.

On examination it was found possible to get at the ice with saws, and for fifteen hours the men laboured in shifts until they became so drowsy that, in spite of the remonstrances of the first lieutenant, they worked with their eyes shut, and were granted permission by the easy-going captain to take a short period of rest. "I was contemplating the languid action of those whose

turn it was to take the pumps, and more particularly, three or four jaded forms, stretched out in death-like slumber on the lee side—when, suddenly, there was a perceptible yielding beneath the feet, with the grating sound of breaking ice, and, before a word could be spoken, the liberated ship righted entirely; while broken spars, the bent saw, and the massy berg, were all in commotion together.” After almost ten months of imprisonment, “the good ship was once more in her own element, and subject to the will of man”. She was off Charles Island, 234 miles from the point where her easterly drift had begun.

Although Back had hoped against hope that he might yet be permitted to return and achieve something to redeem the expedition from utter failure, he found the ship, once released from her icy sheath, so “crazy, broken, and leaky” that he regretfully gave the order to sail homeward. Failing health and the bitterness of disappointment could not dull his enjoyment of natural scenery: he enlarges on the “frowning grandeur” of the Labrador cliffs which guard the entrance to Hudson Strait. Progress was still retarded by loose ice; and it was not until August that the rickety ship and her jaded crew reached the open waters of the Atlantic.

Even then the *Terror's* troubles were not over. Temporary repairs and unremitting toil at the pumps kept her barely manageable and buoyant until, when nearing the British Isles, she was caught in a heavy gale. The loosened stern-post worked frightfully with the plunging of the ship and started fresh leaks; the harassed crew could scarcely keep the water down; and the labouring vessel rolled so heavily that she could barely recover herself. Back, who had been steering for Stromness, now bore up for the Irish coast; late at night on September the 3rd he brought his ship into Lough Swilly harbour; and when, by a natural reaction, the men collapsed at the pumps, he ran her aground on a sandy beach. At low water on the following morning all were able to view what it was just as well they had not previously had notice of. Twenty feet of the keel, with ten feet of the stern-post, were driven over more than three and a half feet, “leaving a frightful opening for the ingress of water”. The forefoot was gone, and the whole ship so strained and twisted

that "there was not one on board who did not express astonishment that we had ever floated across the Atlantic".

Under these circumstances it is surprising that the Chatham shipwrights were able to coax and hammer the tortured framework of the *Terror* back into a seaworthy condition. This, however, they accomplished, and she sailed away with James Ross to the south, where she gave her name to a volcanic mountain on the edge of the ice-sheet which Scott of the Antarctic has made famous, before going north with Franklin and leaving her timbers in the icy waste of Victoria Strait. But the *Terror's* captain had done battle with the ice for the last time. The helpless suspense of his latest cruise had been particularly trying to one who had never spared himself or been found wanting when action was demanded. "I am very much shaken," he wrote to Franklin. Decorated by learned societies in London and Paris, and honoured by the knighthood which he had well deserved by the sum of his polar exploits, if not by his most recent commission, he retired with broken health and was never again afloat. If not a great captain, he had been one of those brave and zealous lieutenants who make great captains possible. He has a special claim on the regard of Americans as a pioneer of the North, and as a prose artist who has described its landscapes and its people with love and understanding. He deserves a better memorial than the name of a remote and turbulent stream of which few people have ever heard.



## Simpson and Franklin, 1837-1848

THE failure of Back's last venture put a stop to official Arctic enterprise for nearly a decade: no individual or organization was disposed to spend more on the conquest of the stubborn Passage; while the seamen whose perseverance had penetrated its outer defences were growing old, and either unfit for service or dispersed in other employments. Franklin was governor of Tasmania; the older Ross, consul at Stockholm; Parry and Back had retired from active endeavour with health permanently impaired; while James Ross, with the *Erebus* and the renovated *Terror*, had been dispatched to the Antarctic, where he was to give his name to the vast ice-sheet so celebrated in twentieth-century discovery. At this juncture Governor George Simpson of the Hudson's Bay Company determined to take up the work of discovery, and began to look about for a man to direct it.

For some years the governor had employed as his secretary a young kinsman, Thomas Simpson. Born in 1808, Simpson had been frail and unhappy as a child, which perhaps accounts for his nervous and unbecoming self-assertiveness in years of maturity. On graduating from the University of Aberdeen, he accepted his cousin's invitation and migrated to Rupert's Land. There his reaction was not untypical of the young intellectual when first cast upon the world. "With one or two exceptions," he wrote to his brother Alexander, "I hold the ability of our wigs in utter contempt . . . If common justice is done us, we shall soon become conspicuous." Nor did he spare his cousin: "He is guilty of little meannesses at table which are quite beneath a gentleman, and, I might add, are indicative of his birth"—an allusion to the circumstance that George Simpson had been born out of wed-

lock; by natural inheritance he was as genteel as his young secretary. Splendidly gifted as he was, Thomas Simpson never understood the importance of tact and sympathy as factors in leadership; and on one occasion this involved him in a brawl with a Red River métis, whom he handled so roughly that the half-breeds demanded that he should be flogged, until his cousin George appeased them with a gift of money and a barrel of rum.

Though restless, discontented, and impatient for distinction, Simpson does not seem to have cast himself in the role of discoverer. After he had achieved reputation as an explorer, jealousy prompted him to criticize his predecessors with ill-nature; but, meeting Back on the Red River in 1833, he remarks urbanely: "He seems a very easy and affable man: deficient, I should say, in that commanding manner with the people so necessary in this savage country." Back's success on the Fish River, he noted, was greater than any of the traders had anticipated. It was only later, when he had entered into competition with the seamen, that Simpson began to disparage them unfairly.

In 1836 when the governor began to assemble men for his Arctic enterprise, Thomas Simpson was an obvious choice, as he alone of those available had the knowledge of mathematics necessary for a geographical survey. But with a well-grounded mistrust of his kinsman's capacity to secure loyalty and obedience, he gave command of the party to Chief Factor Peter Warren Dease, making his cousin second-in-command, with full responsibility for surveying and other scientific work. The success of this arrangement (though bitterly resented by Simpson at the time) is evidence of the governor's shrewdness. Simpson's notorious unpopularity with the *voyageurs* unfitted him for command: Dease kept the men obedient and good-humoured; and, though vested with full authority, gave his impetuous young colleague his own way and grudged him no credit or honour. Simpson sneers at his commander's easy-going laziness; but, sensitive as he was, he never charges him with interference in the formation of plans or in their vigorous execution.

After taking a course in navigation at Fort Garry, Simpson set out late in 1836 for the North West, and joined Dease and his comrades on Slave Lake. Their orders were to spend the first summer in charting the Alaskan coast from Return Reef to

Point Barrow. Detaching a party to construct a base (Fort Confidence, at the north-east end of Great Bear Lake), Dease and Simpson with the main expedition descended the Mackenzie and headed west. Assured by Franklin's chart of the trend of the coast, they were not obliged, as he had been, to hug the shoal water, but struck out boldly on the seaward side of the ice barrier which lined the beach. Though suffering severely from cold and fog, they reached Return Reef on July the 23rd (Franklin had barely made this point by mid-August); but five days later were grounded by an impassable ice-field at a distance of only sixty miles, in a direct line, from their objective. Simpson at once volunteered to cover this on foot with a small party. Blinding fog added to his labours by compelling him to adhere rigidly to "the tortuous line of the coast", and might have baffled him entirely had he not by a happy accident encountered a band of Eskimos at a point where the receding ice made navigation again possible. With prompt resourcefulness he borrowed an oomiak in exchange for a gift of tobacco, and, proceeding by water, he was on August the 4th rewarded by the sight of "a low sandy spit, forced up into mounds by ice pressure". It was Point Barrow, which had been reached from the west by the Beechey expedition eleven years before. The western gap in the chart had been closed.

Simpson was overjoyed at this success. "Our plans, thanks to my foresight, are admirably laid," he wrote to his brother, Alexander; "mine alone is the victory . . . Dease is a worthy, indolent, illiterate soul." A just appreciation, no doubt, but Simpson, who had sneered at Back's "self-admiration", might have noted that that honest sailor never sought to exalt his own character and achievements by disparaging a comrade.

After wintering at Fort Confidence the explorers set out in the summer of 1838 to connect the mouth of the Coppermine with the Fish River estuary. Following the course which Franklin had taken in 1821, they by-passed Bathurst Inlet, but near Point Turnagain were immovably blocked by ice. Simpson undertook a strenuous journey on foot, and added a hundred miles to the known coast in an easterly direction, after which the expedition returned to Confidence. Dease now wished to give up, urging the lazy man's excuse that the difficulties were great, and that

enough had been done to satisfy the governor; but, yielding to his subordinate's insistence, he consented to a third attempt in the following year. In 1839 they launched out again, and after a grim struggle with the ice as far as Cape Alexander, Simpson's farthest in the previous year, made rapid progress, and in early August sighted the ill-omened coast of King William Land looming away to the north-east. For a time it appeared that this body was connected with the mainland by an isthmus which would bar further progress; the discovery of Simpson Strait, three miles wide at its narrows, dispelled this fear; and rounding what they took to be Point Ogle, the explorers obtained a distant view of Victoria Headland, recognized "by Sir George Back's exquisite drawing", which assured them that their declared objective had been reached.

It was now mid-August, the date fixed by the Admiralty, ever since Franklin's disastrous First Journey, for the termination of such enterprises. Dease was eager to return; Simpson, judging that September weather, however trying to land travellers, was not unsuitable for well-fed and well-clothed boat crews, as the old ice was largely dissolved and the young ice not yet a serious obstacle, wished to go on. Dease, good-naturedly declaring himself a "supernumerary", yielded the point. Simpson conducted the expedition to the north-east forty miles past Cape Britannia, where, asserting quite gratuitously that the Isthmus of Boothia did not exist, and that the North West Passage was complete (visibility was only five miles at the time), he turned back. The young explorer was sceptical in the wrong quarter; he did not suspect, as he put about, that the clue which he sought lay not to the east but to the north, in the open waters of Rae Strait.

On the return voyage the unwearied Simpson charted the south shore of King William Land, built his memorable cairn at Cape Herschel, and laid down fifty miles of coast on the land mass which he named Victoria (actually the eastern part of the Wollaston Land of Richardson and Kendall). Reascending the Coppermine to Bloody Falls, the expedition picked up the supporting party at Confidence, crossed Great Bear Lake in tempestuous weather, struggled up the Mackenzie through great masses of ice drifting downstream, and reached Fort Simpson on October the 14th in a temperature of fourteen below. The ruth-

less Simpson, who had taken all possible advantage of a favourable season and the ungrudging support of his comrades, asserted, not without truth, that he had directed the most memorable piece of exploration ever accomplished by boat.

This splendid success engendered in the previously frustrated young man a boastfulness which prompted him to compare the achievements, as well as the courage, enterprise, and efficiency, of his predecessors unfavourably with his own; and some modern authorities have gone too far in endorsing this claim. Certainly the journeys of 1837 and 1839 were marked by a speed and economy of effort with which the naval explorers could not vie; but this may have been due in part to the weather; the journey of 1838, be it noted, was a more absolute failure than Franklin or Back ever suffered while travelling by boat. But any comparison founded on mere achievement is scandalously unjust. For his first journey Franklin had to rely on men of unfamiliar speech and habits, with whom he could only imperfectly sympathize; men, we may suppose, not of first-class quality, as the fur-traders were not likely to spare the pick of their brigades for a service from which they prophesied nothing but disaster. Appalled by the strange and incalculable risks which they were called upon to run, the men were sullen and mutinous; the officers had little to guide them through the unknown except the gloomy predictions of the Indians. Dease and Simpson, on the other hand, led a band of men bound to them by habit and discipline; their objectives were limited and clearly defined; the conditions which they were to encounter, and the equipment which they required, had been determined for them by the hard-won experience of Franklin, Richardson, and Back. The success of Franklin's Second, as compared with that of his First Journey, shows what one expedition could teach; with the lessons of three expeditions to draw on, Simpson could not with fairness and modesty boast of his success to those who, by hardship and danger, had taught him how success could be obtained.

Proud as he was of his achievement, Simpson was not yet satisfied, and, given his own way, might have won undisputed first place among the Arctic discoverers of his day. "I should consider it shameful to grow weary like our predecessors with one or two campaigns," he wrote characteristically to his



brother. (Apart from his Hudson Bay voyage, Back had entered the Arctic Circle four times, Parry, five, James Ross, six; the two former had laboured until forty years of age, and were quite disabled by exertion and hardship.) He therefore sought authorization for a boat journey from the Fish River east, over the Isthmus of Boothia (which he declared to be non-existent), to the Strait of Fury and Hecla. Had he been permitted to make this attempt, he would have proved the correctness of Ross's chart in that quarter, but by diverting his course to the north he might well have discovered the Straits of Rae and Bellot, thus completing the ocean Passage. Unfortunately Dease had taken the extended leave to which both explorers were entitled; and the governor, still unwilling to trust his cousin with an independent command, refused his permission. Thomas Simpson then transferred his request to the governors of the Company in London, who sanctioned the enterprise; but in the meantime the unhappy young man, mistrusting the success of his application, afflicted in body and mind by the reaction from the unnatural exertions of the last three years, and tortured by the fear (groundless, as it proved) that Dease, and not himself, would be given the chief credit for their joint discoveries, decided to take his leave also, and return to Europe. In June 1840 he left the Red River with four half-breed companions, intending to journey to New York by way of Minneapolis; a little to the south of the International Boundary he met a violent death under circumstances which are still shrouded in mystery. This tragedy was the last link in the chain of coincidence which led up to the disaster of the *Erebus* and *Terror*.

The circumstances attending the death of Thomas Simpson were reported by James Bruce in a deposition sworn before Henry H. Sibley, J.P., Clayton County, Territory of Iowa, in late June 1840.

In the early summer of 1840 Simpson set out from the Red River Settlement on his way south with four half-breed companions, James Bruce, John Bird, and the two Antoine Legros, father and son. On the way they overtook a train of carts going in the same direction, but, though in some fear from hostile Indians, Simpson insisted on pushing ahead. A few days later he

was seized with an obsession (or, as his brother would have it, with a grounded conviction) that the others were about to murder him. What followed might well have inspired Robert Louis Stevenson with the gruesome final episode of *The Master of Ballantrae*. Pleading ill health, Simpson told the men that they were returning to the Red River; on being advised that a doctor would be found at Lac Qui Parle, a short journey ahead, he replied that "no physician would do him any good; he did not require one", and persevered in his intention of turning back. On arriving one night at a point a mile or two from the Turtle River, one of the half-breeds asked Simpson if they should not halt and pitch the tent; he replied sullenly that that was "just as the others pleased". While the men were engaged in this task, two shots were heard; Bird "groaned and fell dead"; the elder Legros leaned against a cart and fell to the ground two minutes later. Simpson came forward bearing a double-barrelled gun, and cried that he had done no murder—the men had plotted to kill him. On Bruce's declaring that he knew of no conspiracy, Simpson assured him that his life was safe: the others had wished to kill him. Their attention was diverted by the elder Legros calling to his son to come and kiss him for the last time. Simpson asked the half-breed if he had not plotted his murder; the latter replied, "No". Bruce and Legros mounted their horses and rode off in search of the wagon-train, which they knew could not be far off. They found it in the course of the night; and the next morning Bruce returned with four other men, two of whom subsequently made sworn declarations at Red River—Robert Logan before A. Ross, J.P., and James Flatt before John Bunn, magistrate. The substance of their testimony was that they had found Bird, Legros, and Simpson dead, the latter lying in his tent with the top of his head blown off.

The three bodies were buried on the spot; that of Simpson was later removed and re-interred at the Red River colony. The obvious and generally accepted theory that after killing his comrades Simpson had taken his own life was strenuously disputed by his brother, Alexander, who contended that the young explorer had fallen a victim to the "long-treasured animosity" of the half-breeds, and drew attention to certain discrepancies in the evidence to support his opinion. However, no further in-

vestigation seems to have been undertaken, and the theory that Simpson acted as was reported in a fit of insanity brought on by his natural moodiness, and aggravated by ill health and the bitterness of frustrated ambition, remains the most natural and plausible supposition. The graphic and circumstantial narrative of Bruce can hardly have been the invention of a conscience-stricken illiterate; he could not have thought up so convincing a representation of hopeless and reckless despondency. Alexander Simpson does not make out a strong case for discrediting Bruce: the inconsistencies in the testimony, which he cites, would not have surprised an experienced barrister.

A proper investigation was difficult, for the officials of the Hudson's Bay Company had no jurisdiction over an offence committed in the Territory of Iowa, while the judicial authorities of that region were doubtless content, especially in a case involving foreigners only, to accept the hypothesis which was most obvious and caused them least trouble. Legros junior was never formally examined, and the rest of the enquiry was hardly conducted in an inquisitorial spirit. For instance, Bruce's narrative implies—he was not made to be explicit—that Bird was shot in the back; yet neither Logan nor Platt were questioned as to the appearance of his wound, which would have gone far to confirm or completely discredit the version of the affair furnished by Bruce.

The publication of Simpson's Journal did nothing to shake the official belief that Ross's 1833 chart was accurate, and that Regent's Inlet was a blind alley. However, the young trader's survey had extended the map of the continental shoreline in an easterly direction to longitude  $95^{\circ}$ , overlapping by eighteen degrees Parry's westerly penetration to longitude  $113^{\circ}$ , and had narrowed the problem of the North West Passage to the gap of something over three hundred miles which separated Barrow Strait and Melville Sound from the continental shoreline. There was a general feeling that this obstacle could easily be overcome, and in 1844, shortly after the return of Ross and Franklin from the Antipodes, the Royal Geographical Society requested the Admiralty to make the attempt. Their Lordships consented, and ordered the *Erebus* and *Terror* to be refitted for this purpose.

and equipped with auxiliary steam power. When Sir James Ross declined to resume command, the Admiralty, with some misgivings, gave the appointment to the ageing Franklin. Captain Francis Crozier, an old Parry man, who had been south with Ross, commissioned the *Terror* as second-in-command, and Commander James Fitzjames sailed with Franklin on the *Erebus*, with the virtual post of flag-officer.

Franklin's orders were to sail to Cape Walker by way of Lancaster Sound, and thence to set a south-westerly course for Bering Strait. If stopped by ice in Barrow Strait, he was to try the northerly route up Wellington Channel. His expressed intention of ascending to Jones Sound, if baffled elsewhere, or of trying to go straight south from Cape Walker to Simpson Strait, as well as his repeated assurances that Lady Franklin need not be alarmed if the expedition failed to return within three years, prove that that seasoned veteran expected no easy triumph, however much he may have ostensibly encouraged the careless optimism of his officers.

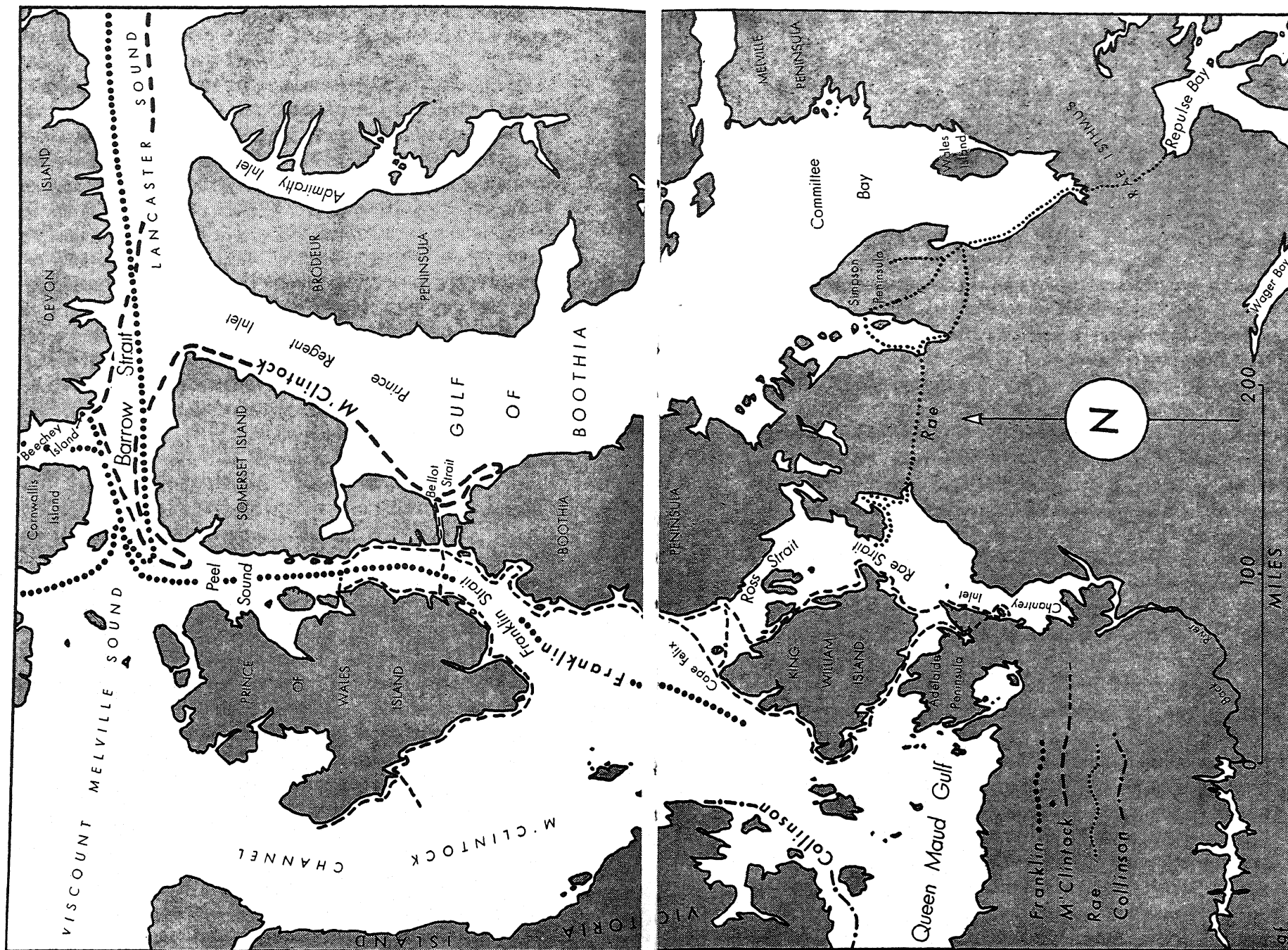
The two ships sailed in May 1845 and anchored off Greenland to replenish their stores from a supply ship which had accompanied them to that point. There we get our last authentic glimpse of the kindly and vigorous old man who commanded them. Despite his age and corpulence, he took as companion a young officer, Le Vescomte, and ran off like a boy to climb the highest hill on the coast—it was his first visit to Greenland. A few days later his ships were becalmed in Baffin Bay at no great distance from a whaler whose captain received an invitation to dine that evening with Sir John Franklin; but in the afternoon a strong breeze arose and the *Erebus* and *Terror*, filling their sails, bore away to the west and passed for ever beyond the ken of civilized man.

Only the most hopeful had expected the expedition to navigate the Passage in the 1845 season; and as several months must intervene between its emergence from Bering Strait and its arrival at any but an isolated Siberian port, no concern was felt or expressed when the year 1846 terminated with it still unreported. In the summer of the ensuing year, however, the aged Sir John Ross publicly stated his fear that the *Erebus* and *Terror*

had been permanently beset beyond Cape Walker, and offered to command a ship sent to their relief. About the same time Dr. Richard King, Back's former comrade, made no small stir by a series of letters to the Colonial Office, asserting that the expedition must have been icebound near Melville Island, and that the men who composed it would be compelled to retreat on foot to the Great Fish River, to which point he volunteered to take canoes for their rescue. Sir James Ross observed drily that, after descending a river six hundred miles in length with transport so limited, King "would more probably be in a condition to require than to afford relief"; though he too expressed the fear that Franklin had come to grief in the ice-stream which had halted Parry. Though the Admiralty refused to perturb itself, after the lapse of twenty-four months, over crews which were victualled for thirty-six, as a matter of precaution it directed Sir James Ross to fit out for the Arctic two ships destined to win fame in the anxious years which followed, the *Enterprise* and the *Investigator*; and briefed Sir John Richardson for a land journey to the Mackenzie-Coppermine region, to be undertaken if the ships were still unreported in 1848. The Fish River hypothesis was rejected on the ground that, on King's own showing, the missing men were nearer to the Coppermine, and the doctor's angry protest that at sixty-one Richardson was too old for a polar journey, and that he himself was the man to conduct it, was ignored.

The odd thing is that the eccentric and voluble King, though confuted by all ascertainable facts, was right, and, given his way, might have obtained early news of the tragedy which he would certainly have arrived too late to avert. For in June 1848, while Richardson was hastening to the Coppermine and Ross to Barrow Strait, the last survivors of the missing ships were dying of want, far to the east of the one region, and far to the south of the other, on the shores of the barren estuary which Back and King had explored. Some time in 1847 or 1848 the North West Passage had yielded up its secret to the sledge parties of Franklin; but had taken a terrible revenge on the successful intruders.

"Fate robbed them of the homecoming for which they yearned"—Homer.



Showing probable route of Franklin's last voyage and the routes of the searchers—McClintock, Collinson, and Rae.



## The Eastern Approaches, 1848-1851

ON July the 7th, 1819, when Franklin was on his way from Stromness to Hudson Strait, and Parry was anxiously scanning the Greenland ice for leads, there was born to Henry McClintock of Dundalk, Ireland, a son whose destiny it was to bring to a triumphant conclusion the task at which his elders had laboured so long, of defining a navigable Passage and of charting the northern islands. His father (an extreme Tory, one supposes) christened him after the two Austrian kaisers who had signalized themselves by hostility to the French Revolution; but the future of little Francis Leopold lay neither in politics nor in war. At the early age of twelve he obtained a berth on a man-of-war and went to sea.

"The subtle spell of the Celtic disposition" had given the young Irishman a personal charm without impairing the solid qualities inherited from his Scottish and Huguenot ancestors. From the outset he worked hard to excel in his profession, and with an eye to the future in naval architecture, qualified as a steam engineer. But his destiny was slow in unfolding itself. He grew up quiet and reserved, and, though highly respected by his few intimates, lacked the "interest" to procure continuous service or rapid promotion. Early in 1848, when loitering at Plymouth as an unemployed lieutenant, he met an old shipmate, Captain Smyth (Back's first lieutenant in the *Terror*), and was by him introduced to Sir James Ross, who was fitting out the *Enterprise* and *Investigator* for the first Franklin relief expedition. That usually dour and self-centred officer at once conceived for McClintock the fondness which he retained to the end of his

days, and posted him to the *Enterprise* as second lieutenant, with Robert McClure as his immediate superior.

The two ships sailed in June 1848, passed Lancaster Sound, and running into ice in Barrow Strait were compelled to winter in Port Leopold, on the north-east angle of North Somerset. At Fort Enterprise Franklin had employed the enforced leisure of the winter months with books of devotion; the intensely practical McClintock devoured all the works on geology on which he could lay his hands, and probably engaged McClure in the same study—ten years later a savant of Trinity College, Dublin, was able to construct a geological map of the Canadian archipelago from the specimens which those two officers had brought home. In early spring a number of sledge parties were sent out, one of which, under Ross and McClintock, made the important discovery of Peel Sound, and followed its eastern shore south to Four River Point. From there they turned back, not suspecting that chance had guided them to the very route which the missing ships had followed. Another detachment examined Fury Point and ascertained that it had not been visited by Franklin's men.

These journeys were undertaken on the supposition that the ordinary ration of the seaman could support him in the continuous labour of sledging, and in exposure, day and night, to low temperatures. The precise weight which a man could be expected to draw had not been calculated; the sledges, improvised on board ship, were heavy and cumbersome. In consequence all parties returned weak and emaciated; scurvy broke out; and seven men died. The season proved late; the ships were not released until August the 29th, and on making sail to the west they were beset and drifted helplessly back to Lancaster Sound. On September the 24th they shook loose and sailed home, having failed utterly in their appointed mission. The report of Richardson, when he came back from the Mackenzie, was equally disappointing.

Up to that time, though it had been feared that the *Erebus* and *Terror* had come to grief, no serious apprehension had been felt for the lives of those who manned them. The fact that John Ross, in the *Victory*, and Back, in the *Terror*, had withstood the worst attacks of which the polar climate was capable, and brought their men back in safety, had led persons, official and unofficial



(both equally prone to reason from results rather than from the accidental circumstances which produced them), to make light of the dangers of the Arctic. But now the probability that over a hundred men were starving in its frozen wastes stirred up a vigorous response on both sides of the Atlantic. A wealthy American, Mr. Henry Grinnell, fitted out a rescue expedition at his own expense. Lady Franklin, assisted by public subscription, did the same. The rugged septuagenarian, Sir John Ross, joined the search in the yacht *Felix*. Dr. King renewed his clamour for the command of a Fish River expedition; but, reasoning, like everyone else, on the false supposition that Franklin had sailed west of Cape Walker, he had no case. Sir James Ross pointed out that, on King's own showing, Franklin was nearer to the Mackenzie, the Coppermine, and to Regent's Inlet (where the *Fury's* stores still lay in good preservation) than to the Fish River; and Back declared that after his experiences on the Barren Lands, Franklin would never have made for any point on the continental shore east of the Mackenzie. It is strange that it did not occur to King to suggest that Franklin might have anticipated Ross and McClintock in the discovery of Peel Sound, and have taken that route, passing to the left instead of to the right of Cape Walker. This possibility presented itself to no one, except, perhaps, to Lady Franklin. The plans of the Admiralty for 1850 were based on the assumption that Franklin had got into trouble beyond Cape Walker, or that, availing himself of the optional clause in his Instructions, he had ascended Wellington Channel and had been beset to the north of Bathurst or Melville Island.

The *Plover* had already been dispatched to the Alaskan coast with orders to send boats east to the mouth of the Mackenzie. It was now resolved to send ships fully equipped for ice navigation through Bering Strait to the western shores of Banks Land and Melville Island. Captain Richard Collinson, in the *Enterprise*, was chosen to take charge of these; McClure (now a commander) was appointed to second him in the *Investigator*. These ships were refitted and hurried off in January 1850 in the hope that they might reach the Arctic by way of South America before the autumn freeze-up. Two fresh vessels, the *Resolute* and the *Assistance*, were made ready for a renewed search by way of Lancaster Sound.

The disappearance of Franklin caused a revolution in the methods of polar exploration. Up to that time the seaborne expedition had done most of its work afloat. Observations were made largely from the ship; if one channel were blocked, the navigator put about and looked for another; and submitted to two or three months of active employment out of the twelve. But now time was infinitely precious; and the ice-choked lead must be followed up—Franklin might have found it open water years before—and every mile of coast must be examined for wreckage, for cairns containing records, and to plant food depots for the starving castaways. In the vast area to be searched this could only be accomplished by numerous small detachments carrying their supplies and equipment on sledges.

His experience with Ross had taught the observant and methodical McClintock how this service should be organized. He spent the winter in supervising the design and construction of tents and sledges which combined lightness with efficiency, and in working out the details of rations, sledge loads, and other techniques, which were to make journeys of several months' duration not only possible but comparatively safe.

In May 1850 Captain Horatio Austin sailed with his own ship, the *Resolute*, the *Assistance* (Captain Ommaney, with McClintock as his first lieutenant), and the steam tenders, *Intrepid* and *Pioneer*, which could render valuable service by towing the larger ships when becalmed or hampered by ice. Two men destined to distinction in different spheres were officers on this voyage: Lieutenant J. Sherard Osborn was in command of the *Pioneer*, and Clements Markham, later the celebrated geographer, was mate of the *Resolute*. Both these young men were cheerful amateur journalists to whom we are indebted for many non-professional details of the expedition.

In the early summer the ice, which the winter had formed in Baffin Bay, moved to the southward, leaving in its wake an open space, the "North Water", where the whalers plied their trade, and across which the discovery ships stretched to make the entrance of Lancaster Sound. The process of working up to this region between the ice and the Greenland coast was tedious and sometimes disastrous. In 1830 the pack, urged on with irresistible force by a westerly gale, had crushed a whole convoy of

whalers against the shore ice of Melville Bay and ground nineteen ships to matchwood. As usual there was no loss of life: the men took to the ice and were rescued by comrade ships or walked to the Danish settlements. On this occasion, at least, they made the best of it. "There were a thousand men encamped on the ice, the clusters of tents were a scene of joyous dancing and frolic, for Jack had got a holiday, and the season was long remembered as the year of 'Baffin's Fair'." Probably the owners, who had suffered a loss of £142,600, had a different name for it.

Since loss of life was not much to be apprehended, it was the policy in the whaling business not to reduce the capacity of the ships by reinforcing the hulls, and to balance the resultant losses by the enormous profits of a successful cruise. So far from objecting to this thrift, the men seem heartily to have endorsed it, and to have felt a contempt for the elaborately protected discovery ship. Sherard Osborn, who delighted to play Boswell to the Samuel Johnson of the British seaman, was informed by an old whaler among his crew that the props, braces, and outer sheathing of the *Resolute* merely sank her lower, and made her more vulnerable to pressure, a statement not wholly in accordance with hydraulics and quite at variance with statistics; of the 194 whaling vessels which worked out from the port of Hull between 1772 and 1852 eighty were lost, while not a single discovery ship was fatally nipped prior to abandonment by its crew.

On the way out Austin overhauled two Admiralty brigs, which had been fitted out under the command of an old whaling skipper, William Penny, and dispatched on the same service. Later Sir John Ross in his yacht and the two ships of the Grinnell expedition under Lieutenant De Haven, U.S.N., joined company, and ten ships in all entered Lancaster Sound and brought up at Beechey Island near the entrance to Wellington Channel. Here the first traces of the missing ships were discovered. De Haven and Ommaney found rags, bits of rope, and traces of a tent site near the beach; and Penny, following this clue up, came upon three graves and what was supposed to have been Franklin's 1845-1846 winter harbour. Articles left behind made it plain that the *Erebus* and *Terror* had quitted their anchorage in great haste, and no note was found to indicate their intended course.

Franklin has been harshly criticized for this extraordinary omission, but (apart from the possibility that he left a record that was never found), McDougall of the *Resolute* has suggested a natural explanation. Anchored near the entrances of Barrow Strait, Wellington Channel, and Peel Sound (which he may already have discovered), he was waiting for the summer break-up to reveal what course he *could* follow, when a sudden gale drove the ice out of the harbour carrying the ships with it like plums in a pudding. This actually happened to the *Resolute* and *Intrepid* at Dealy Island in 1853.

Beechey Island was not so situated as to afford any clue as to the route which the ships had taken on their departure. Penny therefore remained near Wellington Channel in order to search it in the following spring; Sir John Ross berthed his ship in the same region; while Austin, attempting to push west through Barrow Strait, was halted by ice and compelled to winter at Griffiths Island. The American ships, the *Advance* and *Rescue*, which had come thus far, being unprovided for the winter, were obliged to return; and Captain Austin, declining De Haven's offer of supplies and an exchange of officers, bade his gallant colleague farewell. Unfortunately De Haven was frozen in at the very outset of his homeward voyage, was drifted up Wellington Channel and down again and out into Baffin Bay, where he remained fast until the spring. His crews suffered much from scurvy until they met the British whalers coming up the bay, who, with generous gifts of fresh meat and vegetables, amply repaid their courtesy to Austin and enabled them to reach home without further mishap. The celebrated Dr. Elisha Kane was assistant surgeon on this expedition.

The departure of Lieutenant De Haven's expedition from the United States was attended by a circumstance too honourable to go unmentioned. Lest they should be suspected of a mercenary purpose in the quest they were undertaking, "men as well as officers" signed a bond renouncing, in event of success, any claim on the £20,000 reward offered for the rescue of the missing crews.

In 1853-1855 Dr. Kane took the tiny brig *Advance* through

Smith Sound into Kane Basin, and so opened the channel which was to conduct Peary to the Pole. After many adventures and hardships, he abandoned his ship, and was making his return by boat when picked up by Lieutenant Hartstein, U.S.N. Lady Franklin was much attached to Kane, and, had his health permitted it, might have given the command of the *Fox* to him instead of to McClintock.

Back at Griffiths Island in the meantime McClintock developed the first of his schemes for lightening the burdens and increasing the range of the sledge parties that were to set out in the coming season. During the autumn and early winter he busied himself advancing food depots for considerable distances along the projected lines of march. When this was accomplished, the ordinary routine of Arctic winter quarters ensued, varied by plays, fancy-dress balls, and school. The trapping of foxes was a popular pastime, and Captain Austin, desiring to turn these animals adrift with metal collars bearing information as to the location of ships and food depots, decreed that none taken alive should be killed; after which "they were all unaccountably dead, unless it were some unfortunate wight whose coat and brush were worthless". The value set upon the fox's pelt by wives and sweethearts outweighed in the minds of the seamen any advantage likely to accrue from his survival to the castaways of the Franklin expedition. Sherard Osborn once led his crew in a wild chase after a polar bear: his gun would not go off, but relying on the rabble behind him, he kept up the pursuit until, turning his head, he perceived no one armed with anything more lethal than the men's mess could provide, and ordered a hasty retreat, which the bear fortunately did not attempt to molest.

In early April the rigour of the winter had relaxed sufficiently for the branch parties to leave. The details of sledging equipment and rations had been carefully worked out, and the load which each man could be expected to haul experimentally ascertained. In addition McClintock had made two major improvements on the methods of Ross; each outgoing detachment was accompanied for the first part of its journey by a supporting sledge which fed both crews, and so permitted the main party to cover a considerable distance with its own supplies undiminished; while for the latter part of the return journey it had the depots

to rely on. Another valuable innovation was the addition to the equipment of a light "satellite" sledge, which enabled two men to make side excursions into bays and around capes, with an immense saving of labour to the rest of the crew. Observing that the supply of tobacco carried on one's person for a long outing is always prematurely exhausted, McClintock included that commodity in the sledge cargo as a necessary preservative of good humour and morale.

A generous tribute to the work of McClintock, Sherard Osborn, and others is paid by the Norwegian explorer, Dr. Nansen: "How well was their equipment thought out and arranged with the means they had at their disposal! Truly there is nothing new under the sun. Most of what I prided myself upon, and what I thought to be new, I find that they had anticipated. McClintock used the same things forty years ago. It was not their fault that they were born in a country where the use of snowshoes is unknown." (Quoted in Apsley Cherry-Garrard's *The Worst Journey in the World*.) Peary reached the North Pole, and Scott the South, by copying the methods of McClintock.

When all preparations were made, Captain Austin assembled the sledge crews and after a short address in which he yielded to McClintock the credit for the measures adopted for their comfort and safety, dismissed them on their various missions. Supported for the first part of his journey by Captain Ommaney, Sherard Osborn pressed south-west, past the towering mass of Cape Walker (which proved to be part of a detached islet named Russell), and traced the west coast of Prince of Wales Island to latitude  $72^{\circ}$ . He turned back on May the 25th, not suspecting that Mr. Wyniatt of the *Investigator* was at that moment on Victoria Island not much more than sixty miles to the west. Lieutenant Browne followed the east shore of Prince of Wales Island (the west shore of Peel Sound), and, like McClintock and Ross, arrived within two hundred miles of the scene of Franklin's disaster; but he too came back reporting the channel probably unnavigable. (Collinson's theory that the narrower the channel the more rapidly it cleared of ice owing to the concentrated force of the tide was then unknown.) In the opposite quarter Captain

Austin examined the south coast of Bathurst Island; Lieutenant Aldrich ascended Byam Martin Channel, while the surgeon, Bradford, when disabled by an injury, mounted his sledge and searched the west side of Byam Martin Island. The most urgent and difficult assignment had been undertaken by McClintock. It was of the utmost importance to communicate with the Winter Harbour of Parry, for it was at that famous landmark that men cast away in the western area would be most likely to leave a record. The first lieutenant of the *Assistance* made this journey (a round trip of 760 miles), in eighty days, left notice of the movements of his expedition and the location of food depots, and brought his crew back in good health. On his previous journey he and Ross had nearly killed themselves and their men in an outing of thirty-nine days. Captain Penny had spent the spring months in Wellington Channel, where he discovered open sea to the north and picked up a piece of charred wood, which might have been, and as is now known, probably was, a relic of the missing ships. This doubtful clue was the only one that that colossal effort had uncovered.

When the ice broke up in midsummer the various commanders pulled their ships out and returned home to report an extensive but fruitless search. But in the meantime the map of the Canadian archipelago was rapidly unfolding. To the north and south of the great ocean corridor formed by Lancaster Sound, Barrow Strait, and Melville Sound, Austin and Penny had given partial shape to the islands which, thirty years before, Parry had merely sighted. For some years also Chief Factor John Rae had been working from the continental shoreline. In 1846 he ascended from York Factory to Repulse Bay, and there wintered—the first white man to do so on a land journey. In the ensuing spring he surveyed Committee Bay, hitherto represented on the charts only by the sketch which his Eskimo friends had made for Sir John Ross. Rae then accompanied Richardson on his rescue journey to the Mackenzie and Coppermine, and in 1851 was employed by the Admiralty to search the south coast of Wollaston Land (Victoria Island) on foot and by boat. In discharge of this duty he went up Victoria Strait, and at one point must have passed—like Collinson after him—within a few miles of the route taken by Franklin's retreating crews. To the east the

*Prince Albert* (Captain Kennedy of the Hudson's Bay Company, and Lieutenant Bellot of the French Navy) entered Regent's Inlet with orders from Lady Franklin to search the Isthmus of Boothia and the islands to the west—the very region, in fact, where success awaited them. Bellot Strait was discovered, but the appearance of ice and islands to the south-west deceived Kennedy into supposing the sea closed in that quarter and, much to the regret of his second-in-command, he turned north to examine North Somerset and Prince of Wales Islands. In the west the greatest deed of all (though unreported for years) had been achieved. When in June 1851 McClintock placed his record at Parry's Monument in Winter Harbour, he did not suspect that at that very moment the *Investigator* lay berthed in Prince of Wales Strait, less than two hundred miles to the south-west, and that her commander, McClure, had ended the age-long quest for the ocean Passage. Though Franklin and his men were irretrievably lost, the task to which they had devoted their lives was accomplished.

The cruise of the *Prince Albert* derives its chief interest from the journal of Lieutenant Joseph René Bellot, of the French Navy, who had obtained leave of absence for this service. The journal is not of great historic or scientific interest but furnishes a lively picture of a gay and intelligent Frenchman amid a shipload of Scottish Calvinists. Religious discussions were not taboo on this cruise, and Bellot, though repelled by the harsh dogmatism of Captain Kennedy, warmly admired his zeal and sincerity. He also became much attached to the "good Mr. Hepburn", who had come back from Tasmania to aid in the rescue of his old commander. Bellot found Kennedy's complete ban on the use of intoxicants while afloat a little irksome: "Doubtless this precaution will add a new lustre to our expedition," he remarks ruefully, and notices that just prior to leaving Stromness the Scots had an uproarious rouse on shore, "before becoming real teatotallers".

Bellot afterwards joined the Belcher expedition, and was drowned in Wellington Channel in 1853.



## Chapter 13



# The Passage made from the West, 1850-1854

IT will be remembered that immediately upon the return of Sir James Ross from Barrow Strait the Admiralty determined to send two ships into the Arctic from the west to institute a search in that quarter. In execution of this purpose Captain Richard Collinson sailed from Plymouth on January the 20th, 1850, in the *Enterprise*, accompanied by Commander McClure in the *Investigator*. In the stormy weather encountered in the Atlantic the *Enterprise* proved a better sailor than her lighter consort, and after the latter had carried away her fore-topmast in an effort to keep up, Collinson decided to leave her behind, judging that in calmer weather she might be the faster of the two, and that the best course was to proceed independently and rendezvous at Cape Lisburne on the Alaskan coast.

The *Investigator* reached the east end of the straits of Magellan in April, and was there taken in tow by the tug *Gorgon*, of the South American squadron. On her passage through she was overhauled by an American steamer "freighted with a cargo of adventurers, about as wild and motley-looking a set of fellows as ever I saw", says Dr. Armstrong, the surgeon. Very likely—the California gold-rush was on. Collinson was found waiting at the west end of the strait; he seems not to have merited Armstrong's insinuation that, despite Admiralty orders, he wished to leave the *Investigator* behind, and reserve for his own ship the credit for anything that the voyage might accomplish. The two ships, however, again parted company in a gale, and when on June the 29th the *Investigator* reached Hawaii, she found that her consort had taken on supplies and sailed for Alaska the day before.

The men of H.M. brig *Swift* volunteered "with true sailors' generosity" to load stores on the ship, and so free her crew for the last shore leave that was to be theirs for several years to come. Before the work of loading was completed McClure made the discovery which determined his own fortune and that of the cruise. The route to the north recommended by Kellett and adopted by Collinson was to set a course NW. around the Aleutian Islands, and thence NE. to Bering Strait, a voyage of some fifty days. But McClure learned from an American skipper that, if he was not afraid to navigate dangerous and uncharted channels in fog, he could cut off three weeks of this time by setting a course through the Aleutians straight for the west coast of Alaska. The risk and responsibility were great, but McClure knew that Collinson was authorized to take the *Plover* with him into the ice if the *Investigator* was not on hand at Cape Lisburne, and he had no mind to be left as a look-out ship in Kotzebue Sound. Promotion had come to him slowly; he was now forty-three, and low on the Commanders' List; this was his last chance of distinction. He took the direct course, plunged into the Aleutian chain, blinded by fog, and began to pick his way by sounding through shoal water and violent and variable currents. A lucky lift in the fog gave him his bearings at the critical moment; the deadly tide-rip, sign of a narrow channel, was seen gradually to die away, and the *Investigator* won through into deep water and entered the Arctic Circle on July the 29th, nearly two weeks ahead of her faster-sailing consort.

Throughout the years of the Franklin search the *Plover* was stationed off the Alaskan coast, keeping in touch with the Eskimos and sending boats into the Arctic every summer to seek news of the missing ships. Her crew were replaced from time to time, and up to this date she had been supplied by Captain Kellett of the *Herald*, who cruised in Bering Strait during the summer and spent the rest of the year in charting the Central American coast. The *Plover* was spoken to on July the 29th: she had not seen the *Enterprise*, and warned of bad ice conditions ahead. On the 31st Cape Lisburne, the rendezvous appointed by Collinson, was reached, and there the *Herald* was met. Kellett had not seen the *Enterprise* and, supposing that Collinson had taken the course which he had recommended, he presumed that she was

many days behind. That course had taken him fifty days: the *Investigator* had come up in twenty-three. McClure must either go into the pack alone or wait for Collinson and chance missing him in the fog; and, unless Kellett chose to interfere, the choice was his to make, for the orders given him by Collinson, while making abundant provision for the *Investigator* if left behind at Bering Strait, had not envisaged the possibility of her arriving first at the Arctic gateway. Though wishing McClure to wait, Kellett was reluctant to give a positive order, and the former made all sail to get away before his senior made up his mind. The *Herald* hoisted the signal: "Had you not better wait forty-eight hours?" to which McClure promptly replied: "Important duty. Cannot on my own responsibility." Thus challenged, Kellett very properly refrained from controlling the movements of a ship not placed expressly under his command, and let the *Investigator* sail away on her adventurous course.

McClure was severely criticized in some quarters for this conduct. Dr. Armstrong, who is perpetually disparaging his commander, states solemnly that "the truth must be told"—McClure informed Kellett that the *Enterprise* was still ahead of him. The implication that the captain of the *Investigator* sought deliberately to impose on his superior is simply ridiculous. Kellett was in possession of all the facts known to McClure: he had spent more than one summer on the station, and was the better judge of the two as to the probable whereabouts of the *Enterprise*. Probably what happened is that McClure pointed out that Collinson might have resolved at the last moment on the same short cut as himself, and had, owing to poor visibility, passed the straits unobserved by the *Herald* or the *Plover*, and that this consideration deterred Kellett from interfering. Armstrong's mischief-making is the more offensive as Collinson's subsequent attitude towards McClure was most generous: on hearing of his getaway he uttered a prayer for his success; he later defended him when attacked in the press; and finally when the respective contributions of Collinson, McClure, and Kellett to the completion of the North West Passage were being examined by a Committee of the House of Commons, Collinson went far to determine its finding by testifying that "the course Captain McClure had followed

was consistent with the instructions he himself had given that officer", and so yielded to the "Investigators" the Parliamentary reward in which Armstrong, the persistent detractor of both McClure and Collinson, had his share.

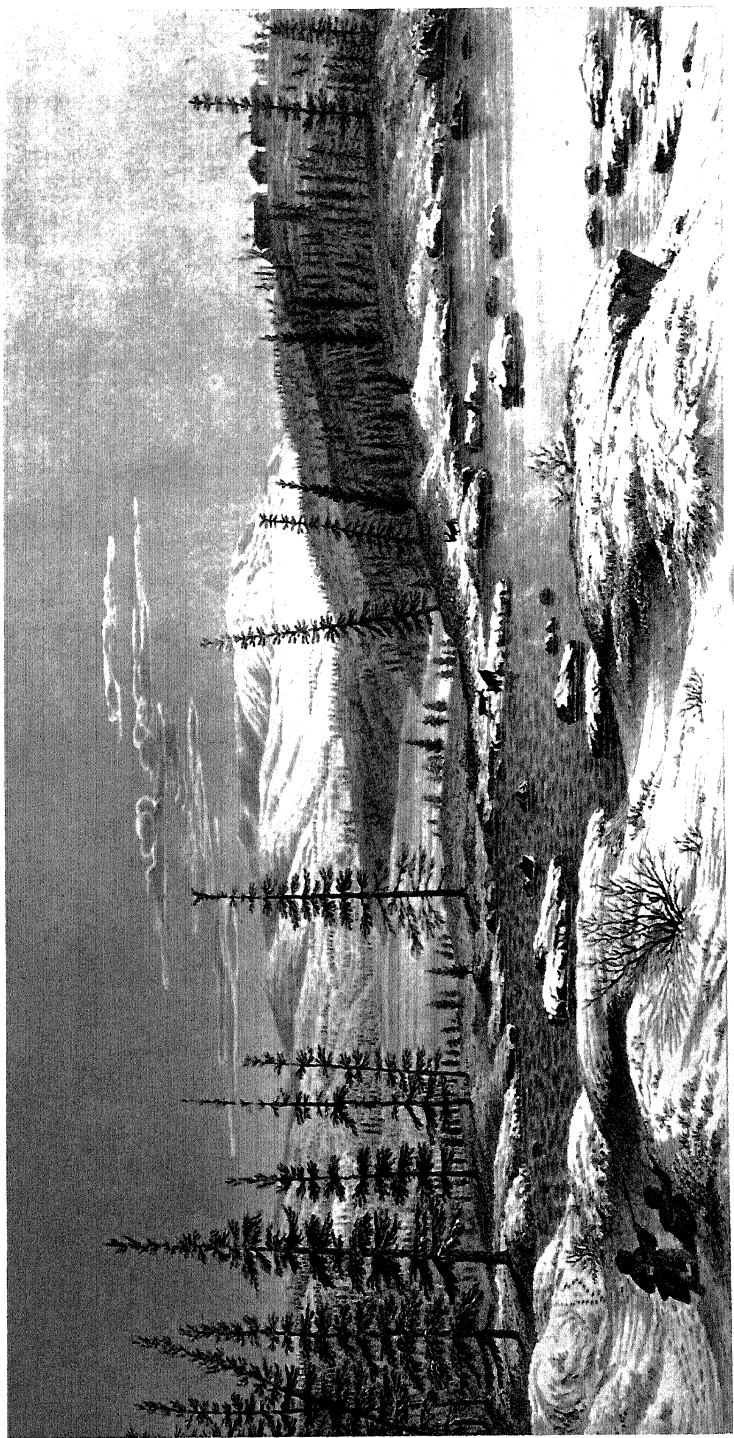
Though Collinson undoubtedly regretted the *Investigator's* action, he had the fairness to perceive that his own defective orders were responsible for it. He felt that McClure "took extreme advantage of the liberty he accidentally enjoyed". But surely the propriety of the latter's conduct depends on whether or not any of Franklin's men could be supposed to be still alive. If not, if the expedition was merely to ascertain their fate, it was McClure's duty to wait for his consort in conformity with the known wish of the Admiralty that the two ships should remain together in the pack. But if there was any chance of saving life, only the most positive orders ought to have restrained McClure when the loss of a day might mean a wasted season. His ultimate justification lies in the fact that he reached the search area in the 1850 season, and Collinson did not.

Two days after parting from the *Herald*, the *Investigator* met the ice and began the dangerous task of working ahead with a shoal coast on the one hand and the ever-present pack on the other. She got around Point Barrow where the *Plover* had warned that the difficulty was greatest, and continued to the south-east, stopping to make enquiries at every Eskimo settlement. The interpreter, a Swiss Moravian named Miertsching, who had spent some years as a missionary in Labrador, had no difficulty in understanding the dialect of the Mackenzie region, but could get no helpful information. The explorers were amused at the natives' artless methods of theft. When received on board, they got possession of a hammer handle, and, the Scripturally-minded Miertsching informs us, "*une femme assise cherchait à le dissimuler, comme autrefois Rachel*"; but she discovered that the British seaman was a less chivalrous character than the Syrian patriarch.

The expedition had been directed to the western shores of Banks and Melville Islands on the supposition that Franklin might have reached that area by way of Jones Sound or Wellington Channel. McClure tried to set a course for this objective, but

found himself continually pinned to the shoreline by the pack. He passed the outlets of the Mackenzie (where his ship was aground for five hours) and touched at Cape Bathurst to question the members of an Eskimo settlement, who, like their Alaskan compatriots, could give no trustworthy information but were found to be a shade more subtle in the practice of fraud. A man came on board in a state of half-naked raggedness, and was given a pair of trousers by a sympathetic seaman. He returned half an hour later in the same guise, and the captain, not suspecting his identity and not to be outdone in charity by the lower deck, gave him more clothes. "Inflated with this success," says Miertsching, "he wished to tempt again his fortune"; but this time he was detected. East of Cape Bathurst the floes began to relax—the *Investigator* had got into the lee of Banks Land—and setting a course NE., she passed Cape Parry, and on September the 6th sighted land to the north. A bold and precipitous promontory of limestone, Nelson Head, was raised and when the "Investigators" rounded this cape to the right, they were encouraged by the trend of the land beyond to believe that they might make the Melville Sound of Parry, now less than a hundred miles away. Land appeared on the starboard bow—they were in Prince of Wales Strait between Banks and Victoria Islands. On September the 16th the *Investigator* was a bare thirty miles from the waters which Parry had sighted from his Melville Island "farthest"—with a glimpse of them the North West Passage was complete, and the action of the tide made the continuity of the strait a certainty—when she encountered a branch of the ice-stream which was squeezed into Prince of Wales Strait at its northern end. She harnessed herself to the lee of a huge floe which drew so much water that only under tremendous pressure could it force her aground, and was carried many miles back on her tracks. A change in the wind brought a gale from the south, drove her forward again in a chaos of grinding, chafing ice, and threatened to crush her against the rockbound coast of Princess Royal Island. "It looks like a bad job this time," observed a young seaman to his veteran companion. "Yes," rejoined the other, shading his eyes from the driving snow to get a view of the cliffs which loomed ahead; "the old craft will double up like a basket when she gets alongside of them rocks." The nonchalance of the old

*Winter view at Fort Enterprise, after a sketch by Lieut. Back, R.N.*





The Arctic Council planning the search for Sir John Franklin (portraits on the wall, left to right, Franklin, Fitzjames, Barrow). Standing (left to right) Sir George Back, Sir William Parry, Captain Edward Bird, Sir James Clark Ross, John Barrow, Lt.-Col. Sabine, Captain Bailie Hamilton, Sir John Richardson; (seated) Sir Francis Beaufort and Captain F. Wm. Beechey.

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salt was justified by the event : the end of the floe caught on the sea-bottom; after a momentary check it began to "coach wheel", and swung the ship in an immense semicircle to the east of the island, where her course was arrested and she began to freeze in. For some days she was distressed by vast convulsions in the ice which seemed to come from the north : tar was squeezed from her seams, and in the intensity of the pressure cabin doors would neither open nor close; on one occasion she was lifted up and flung over on her broadside; but by October the 1st she had settled down on an even keel with no serious damage, and the usual preparations for winter were begun. The devout McClure expressed in his journal the humble gratitude with which he found himself chosen, as now appeared certain, to achieve the honour for which so many brave sailors had contended in vain.

On October the 10th the captain, Lieutenant Cresswell, Dr. Armstrong, Mr. Miertsching, and six seamen made an excursion to the land which formed the eastern side of the strait, named by them after the Prince Consort but actually part of Victoria Island. They displayed the flag on a low ridge and, leaving the seamen to erect a cairn, the four officers struggled through deep snow up the side of a mountain some fourteen hundred feet high. Arrived at the summit, they were rewarded by a clear view of the western side of Prince of Wales Strait to its northern exit, and beyond it saw an endless field of ice which could only be the Melville Sound of Parry. As the frozen waters of the strait itself were hidden from view, McClure declared that he would suspend his claim to the discovery of the Passage until a sledge party had actually made the journey to Melville Sound. The descent from the mountain was, Dr. Armstrong found, "much less fatiguing", but he was not so pleased to discover that his sandwiches were frozen too solid to be eaten, that the tin of meat supplied to the men was in the same condition and could not be opened even with a boarding-pike, and finally that a great cleft had occurred in the sea ice, placing "fifty yards of clear black water" between the travellers and the comfortable security of their ship. For some time they walked back and forth in the gathering darkness, provoked rather than soothed by the guns and rockets which the first lieutenant, Mr. Haswell (who supposed that they had merely lost their way), was letting off for their guidance, and it



was late at night before the sailing-master, Mr. Court, arrived and ferried them back to safety with that novelty, the Halkett india-rubber boat.

On October the 21st McClure and Court left the ship with a sledge crew, and on the 26th reached Point Russell, the NE. extremity of Banks Land, so proving the waters of the strait continuous with the open sea beyond. Though the autumn twilight hid Melville Island from their view, observations made it certain that the coast trending NW. from Point Russell was the very "loom of land" to which Parry had given the name of Banks Land thirty years before. The ocean Passage from Atlantic to Pacific was complete. Several years were to elapse before McClure knew that the priority of his discovery was disputed by some of the men of whom he was in search, and not improbably by his old ship-mate, Graham Gore. He narrowly escaped dying, like Graham Gore, on the scene of his triumph. On the way back he ran ahead of the sledge crew to be the first to tell the news; and when alone and without shelter was caught in a blizzard, and reached the ship "in a deplorable condition".

The winter was passed in comparative cheer and comfort. Dr. Armstrong, who did not love his captain, admits that his provisions for health and warmth were the best that could be devised. Miertsching complained of the humidity below deck, in spite of an elaborate system of ventilation, and red-hot cannon balls placed in every apartment; but the brave Swiss did not give himself up to repining: he designed and manufactured cloth boots with cork soles for the protection of musk-ox hunters, and set an example in using them. By these activities he made himself generally popular, and rid everyone of the conception of a missionary as a person necessarily "austère et rigide".

In mid-April three sledge parties were sent out: Lieutenant Haswell to search the coast of Victoria Island to the south and east; Mr. Wyniatt, mate, to examine the same coast in the opposite quarter to the north and east; Lieutenant Cresswell to proceed to Point Russell, and extend the map of Banks Land to the west. A disastrous omission was the failure to send a party across Melville Sound to Winter Harbour. A record placed at Parry's Monument in May 1851 would have been picked up by McClintock, who, it will be remembered, visited Melville Island

in June: and so the position of the *Investigator*, deep in the Arctic and on the wrong side of the apparently impenetrable ice of Melville Sound, would have been made known.

The branch parties met with varying success: some of Cresswell's men were badly frost-bitten, and he made an early return. Haswell charted most of the west coast of Victoria Island, and narrowly missed meeting Dr. Rae, who reached a point a little south of his "farthest" ten days after he turned back. Wyniatt, a fine officer, though destined to the most tragic of fates, made an extensive survey along the north shore of Victoria Island, and reached his "farthest" on May the 24th, just a day before Sherard Osborn, who had come from Griffiths Island, terminated his march down the coast of Prince of Wales Island sixty miles to the east. Only some years later was it known that the two officers were separated not by land but by the broad belt of McClintock Channel.

After the break-up in late July, McClure, finding all his efforts to emerge from the north end of Prince of Wales Strait baffled by the continual influx of heavy ice from Melville Sound, put about, and on August the 17th found himself again off Nelson Head. At this juncture there was a good deal to be said for pulling out for the winter and reporting to the *Plover* the extensive discoveries which would be lost if the *Investigator* were cast away before returning to civilization. But the expedition had been expressly directed to the west coast of Banks Land, and McClure was still bent on navigating the Passage which he had discovered. So he steered NW., and after rounding Point Kellett, the westernmost angle of Banks Land, met the enemy which had thwarted him in Prince of Wales Strait, and drove at it again. He worked his way rapidly between a level shore with dangerous shoals and a pack of most formidable appearance three miles out to sea, past Prince Alfred's Cape, beyond which he found a bolder coast, cut up by vast gorges and watercourses, and, out to sea, heavier ice. The trend of the shoreline to the NE. pointed straight to Melville Island; but it was not to be; until then the ice, which had a far deeper draft than the ship, had been held off by shoal water; here a steeply shelving shoreline permitted it to close in. On August the 20th the *Investigator* was compelled to anchor herself to a berg close inshore, where she remained for three

weeks, incapable of motion and in perpetual danger from the chafing masses seaward. On the 29th a huge floe bore heavily on the berg to which she was moored, and spun it clean around, carrying the helpless ship after it. The pressure inclined the berg until it overhung the ship; but at the critical moment the floe split, "and the berg, giving one or two heavy rolls, bore us with it into deeper water, and into the midst of ice in the wildest commotion". The ship's rudder was damaged, and the pressure on her stem relieved only by blasting. The next day a floe threatened to ride the ship down: McClure ordered the hawsers cast off, that the ship might merely be pushed ashore and still afford a winter shelter for her crew, when the cables broke of their own accord and the vessel slipped out of the nip. She was caught again, heaved up, and thrown over on her broadside, where she lay like a dead creature until charges touched off by Wyniatt, the demolitionist, shattered the ice and restored her to an even keel. The "appalling evidence of pressure in the huge masses that were piled together and forced up along the shore" was a mute testimony to her luck.

On September the 10th the pressure relaxed enough for the *Investigator* to proceed, and warping, blasting, in tow of her boats, and making sail when wind and space permitted, the gallant little ship clawed her way up that terrible coast. "Some idea may be formed of the narrow strip of water along which the *Investigator* to proceed, and warping, blasting, in tow of her occasion, as they approached a cape, the lower studding-sail boom had to be 'topped up' to allow the vessel to pass through a crack between the steep cliffs on the one hand and the floes on the other." On the 19th she was badly nipped, her stern lifted up fourteen inches, and her bulwarks stove in. On the next day, again caught in pressure off Cape Crozier (now Cape McClure), she was constrained to blast out an ice-dock and seek refuge in the heart of a floe, affording her surgeon leisure for observation and retrospect. "Cape Crozier," says Armstrong, "is four hundred feet high, while a profile view gives it an inclination of some ten or twelve degrees, falling back in ledges with the debris forming a buttress at its base, extending upward nearly a third of its height; yet, when viewed from the front, it appears quite vertical, and the desolate grandeur of its appearance was wonder-

fully striking from the perilous position whence we viewed it. . . .

"There was nothing deserving the name of bay or harbour along any part of this coast, nor any protection or shelter for ships; and exposed as it is to all the fury and violence of westerly and north-westerly winds, it stands without parallel for the dangers of its navigation in any part of the world." The land ice was a regular outwork: "Huge pieces, hundreds of tons in weight, were seen thrown up on end, while others equally large had been forced for a considerable distance up the escarpment of a coastline, in some places inclining not more than ten degrees from the perpendicular."

When they again got under way the "Investigators" could hope for some relief: since leaving Point Kellett they had been crossing the front of the eastward-moving pack; they were now sailing parallel to it, and in the lee of Cape Crozier they came upon a great stretch of open water. Some were speaking of making Melville Island the next day, when a gale arose from the north-east and, bringing the pack with it, forced them back to the dreaded coast of Banks Land. On the afternoon of the 23rd the ship took the ground and remained fast for several hours until a bump from a friendly berg refloated her. Shrinking from the pack, she turned away to the south-east, and daybreak on the 24th showed that she had made her way into a deep ice-free inlet to which McClure gratefully gave the name of the Bay of Mercy.

Here, Armstrong affirms, the captain made his "fatal mistake". Immediately to the east, he declares, lay loose "sailing ice", and beyond it, as Mr. Court ascertained a day or two later, was open water which would have permitted the ship to cross to Melville Island, with the prospect in the following summer of a triumphant exit by way of Lancaster Sound. It does seem probable that McClure here missed a chance of crossing the ice-stream of Melville Sound, which Parry, Collinson, and McClintock concurred in believing could be traversed only in "some exceptional season of rare occurrence" (it was first done by Inspector Larsen of the R.C.M.P. in the schooner *St. Roch*); and it must always be a source of regret that the only opportunity ever granted a sailing ship of navigating the Passage was lost by so narrow a margin. Yet Armstrong's peevish censure is unjust: until he received Court's

report (which may have come too late to be of service), McClure had no reason to expect an improvement in sailing conditions; in late September the danger of being frozen for the winter in the moving pack, of which Armstrong makes light, must have appeared very serious indeed to Back's former officer in the *Terror*; and finally it appears from Miertsching's report that the horrors of the cruise had reduced the ship's officers to a state of nervous exhaustion bordering on demoralization. Under these circumstances, and with the information which he possessed on September the 24th, McClure took the natural course in availing himself of the comfortable berth so unexpectedly offered, and wintering in the Bay of Mercy.

Mr. Miertsching was a man whose sense of humour and breadth of sympathy were not impaired by his fervid evangelism; and the extracts from his diary contained in the *Journal de M. Miertsching, interprète du Capitaine MacClure dans son voyage au Pole Nord* [sic] have particular interest as furnishing information on matters which the professional seaman would have taken for granted. He tells two anecdotes dated September the 23rd, 1851, the day before McClure put his ship into the Bay of Mercy, which serve to explain why he did so.

On the afternoon of the 23rd one of the ice-mates (Greenland whalers appointed to advise the captain on the problems of ice navigation) quitted his post in the crow's-nest without permission. "Ice, captain," he said; "nothing but ice; as far as the eye can reach I do not see a spoonful of water, and yet we advance always. I cannot bear to remount" (to the crow's-nest). "He had," says Miertsching, "the expression of one who has just seen a spectre."

Two hours later the ship struck a shoal; and the boats' crews, the brave Swiss among them, exhausted themselves in fruitless endeavours to heave her off. When Miertsching came on board, dripping with perspiration, he was addressed by the captain: "When you have changed your clothes come and have a cup of tea with me!"

"When I entered his cabin, he rose and pointing with a finger to an open book, 'See,' said he, not without bitterness, 'how these passages of the Bible correspond to our situation!'

"He pointed to the Verses 3 and 4 of Psalm 34: 'Glorify the Lord with me, and let us exalt His name together.

" 'I sought the Lord, and He heard me, and delivered me from all my fears.'

"I read this passage aloud. M. McClure added: 'I know only too well our situation.'

" 'Sometimes,' replied I, 'these responses of the Bible have seemed to me as to you, illusion and mockery. Later the event has justified them.' "

The two men were drinking their tea in silence when a violent shock almost flung them from their seats. "More prompt than lightning" McClure was on the deck. Miertsching followed him, and perceived that the ship had been knocked clear of the shoal by a floe, and was floating "with ease".

These instances of demoralization were probably unknown to, or forgotten by, the officers who later criticized their captain for his decision to winter in the first harbour he found.

Nine days after the *Investigator* left the south entrance of Prince of Wales Strait the *Enterprise* arrived there. In the previous summer Collinson had taken forty-four days, compared with McClure's twenty-three, to come up from Hawaii to Cape Lisburne. He found the pack impenetrable and sailed back to winter at Hong Kong. In the ensuing season he got through, followed in McClure's track along the continental coast (the ice affording him very little choice), and struck north from Cape Bathurst. He entered Prince of Wales Strait on August the 26th, and on the 31st reached its northern outlet which he found blocked with "immense fields of ice". Learning from a cairn that McClure was ahead of him in that quarter, he retraced his course and spent the winter of 1851-1852 at the lower entrance of the strait, some 150 miles south of his truant subordinate at Mercy Bay.

For the "Investigators" the second winter was much more rigorous than the first. They were on half rations, and the shortage of candles condemned them to darkness for most of the twenty-four hours. "Hardly any reading, inappeasable hunger," says Mr. Miertsching, who was obliged to close his school, since the

half-starved men had no taste for study. Hunting was a profitable, and for a time, a popular pastime; finally only the good hunters were allowed abroad since, it was asserted, the others merely frightened the game. In early April 1852 McClure took a party of one officer and six men over Melville Sound to Winter Harbour. The travellers were at first much hampered by hummocky ice, but later they came to a smooth expanse of only one season's growth, thus confirming Mr. Court's report of open sea in the previous autumn. To their intense disappointment they did not find Austin's expedition wintering at Melville Island, nor was there much comfort in the notice placed by McClintock at the top of Parry's monument, from which they merely learned that that officer had reached Melville Island by sledge in June 1851 and that depots of supplies were to be found at Cape Spencer and Port Leopold, hundreds of miles to the east. McClure must have read the handwriting of his old shipmate with a yearning wonder whether he would ever see him again. He could only infer that Captains Austin and Ommaney had returned home in the previous autumn, and that the *Investigator* was left alone in the depth of the Arctic, in a harbour that might not clear, and hemmed in before and behind by the terrible polar pack. On his return "our poor captain made great efforts to show a serene visage", but his despondency was a secret to no one.

It mattered little to McClure and his men where Captain Austin was, if they could obtain a clear passage to the east. As the summer advanced the ice broke up beyond the horns of the harbour; in the Bay of Mercy itself a margin of water appeared along the beach, and all awaited with anxious hearts the southerly gale which alone could drive out the bay ice, and bring them release. The weeks passed by but it never came, and the crew set gloomily to work to fit the ship for a third winter.

For the rest, the story of the "Investigators" is the mournful account of a gallant band wasting away under the joint effects of a harsh climate, and a scanty ration which gave them no strength to resist it. The journals of Armstrong and Miertsching are of particular interest here, for they portray just such a winter as the hapless crews of the *Erebus* and *Terror* must have spent five seasons earlier at the top of Victoria Strait. Early in the autumn one of the seamen went out of his mind; in October Wyniatt, one

of the best officers on board, became violently insane : his servant and Miertsching were the only men who could control him without brute force, and his agonizing cries were a torture to his shipmates; poor Miertsching, lying in his bunk, fancied he could hear them above the howling of a gale. Rations were again reduced, and orders given that all game should be turned in to the quartermaster : "But it was often devoured raw, behind some rock, as soon as captured." The boatswain, the sergeant of Marines, and Mr. Miertsching were the most persevering of the hunters, and when the hands of the latter became so frost-bitten that he could not endure to carry his gun, sailors volunteered for this duty, and, as pay, drank the blood of the slaughtered deer, and devoured the mosses and lichens found in the first stomach. As the cook was short of grease, he made it a practice to grind beans in a mill and serve them as a paste : "*Ce n'est pas succulent*," is Miertsching's terse comment. The "Investigators" might have spared themselves much of this privation, and dipped unreservedly into their supplies, had they known that the rescue ship *Resolute* was even then berthed at Dealy Island only 160 miles away, and that the notice left by McClure at Parry's monument was in the hands of Captain Kellett.

Only once was there the least symptom of mutiny. One day in October the sailors gathered on deck for a quiet discussion, and when the captain appeared, four men approached him to demand an increase in rations. McClure replied gently that he sympathized with the men, and pardoned their irregular assembly, but could not grant their request. "Without departing from their respectful demeanour", the spokesmen insisted, and the captain prudently granted a token increase in the day's allowance. It is equally to the credit of officers and men that this incipient revolt had no sequel in the months of semi-starvation which followed. But though the men submitted to necessity, their sufferings were none the less apparent. In January 1853 Armstrong found a loss of weight averaging thirty-five pounds throughout the ship's company; and symptoms of scurvy were evident : when a sailor fell on the ice, his arm broke "like glass".

McClure kept his faith unshaken that, after the many dangers and trials they had surmounted, final safety would be granted them. "If the Lord were pleased to kill us," he wrote in his



journal, "He would not have shown us all these mercies." But his piety did not teach him to await deliverance passively. He ordered Dr. Armstrong to pick out the thirty fittest men of the crew; with these he would stay by the ship and endeavour to get her out in the coming summer. The remaining thirty were divided into two parties; the one to travel by sledge down Prince of Wales Strait, pick up a depot of provisions left at Princess Royal Island, and make an effort to reach the Hudson's Bay stations on the Mackenzie; the other to go east, take the boat and provisions which McClintock's report placed at Cape Spencer, and try to reach the Greenland whalers, as old Sir John Ross had done twenty years before. Armstrong's warning that the men were totally unfit for such journeys could have been nothing but a formality—"It was that way or the other"—and those chosen to travel were envied by their comrades.

The sledge parties were to set out on April the 15th. On the 6th of that month McClure and Lieutenant Haswell were walking near the ship when they observed a figure coming towards them from the rough ice which marked the entrance of the bay. He was unlike any member of the crew, but they, supposing him to be someone trying out a new travelling dress for the sledge journey, paid no heed until the stranger was observed to make gesticulations like an Eskimo and in his excitement to utter noises which sounded like a wild screech. McClure turned in sudden agitation and cried: "In God's name, who are you?" There was a dead pause while the stranger gathered his breath to reply: "I'm Lieutenant Pim, late of the *Herald*, now of the *Resolute*. Captain Kellett is in her at Dealy Island." By the strangest of chances Kellett, who had parted from McClure at Cape Lisburne, was now bringing aid from the eastern entrance, having gone almost around the world to relieve him.

A seaman, partially overhearing this dialogue, roused the lower deck with the drolly inadequate announcement: "Here's a stranger alongside from some ship!" and all rushed on to the ice to receive the newcomer like a visitant from another world—handling him, pulling him about, and imploring him to make his voice heard. Two men came up with a dog sledge—Pim had run ahead when the snow-covered hulk of the ship came into sight around the cape—to share in the tumultuous reception.

When the first excitement of arrival and recognition was over they were deeply moved at the wasted and haggard appearance of the men they had come to save. The two seamen wept; and when Pim saw Armstrong's mess sitting down to breakfast, "a cup of weak cocoa without sugar, and a moiety of bread", he brought a large piece of bacon from his sledge and gave his hosts the first real meal they had tasted for many a long day.

When the greetings were over Pim related the chain of circumstance to which this unlooked-for rescue was due. When Captain Austin returned to England in the autumn of 1851 there was a general feeling that he had given up the search too soon. His squadron was therefore refitted and put under the command of Sir Edward Belcher in the *Assistance*; Kellett, who had returned from the Pacific, commissioned the *Resolute*; while McClintock and Sherard Osborn took command of the steam tenders *Intrepid* and *Pioneer* respectively. The depot ship *North Star* was added to the command. The five ships rendezvoused at Beechey Island in August 1852 and there divided: Belcher, with the *Assistance* and *Pioneer*, ascending Wellington Channel; Kellett, with the *Resolute* and *Intrepid*, following Parry's old route to Melville Island, while the *North Star* remained at Beechey Island to provide a point of retreat for either detachment in event of mishap.

On September the 4th Kellett's two ships arrived off Winter Harbour, but, finding their entry blocked by six miles of ice, coasted back along Melville Island and found a berth inside an islet named Dealy some distance to the east. McClintock was at once dispatched to the north, and Lieutenant Meham to the west to plant depots for the spring sledge journeys, and the latter returned bringing with him the records which McClure had planted at Parry's monument six months before. From these Kellett learned that a North West Passage had been discovered, and that the ship from which he had parted off the Alaskan coast had lain (and might still be lying) on the north shore of Banks Land, not two hundred miles to the west. As McClure might have made his getaway in the course of the summer, Kellett decided to postpone action to the spring rather than expose some of his own men to a hazardous and possibly fruitless winter journey. In March Lieutenant Pim volunteered to relieve his captain's anxiety by making the earliest spring journey yet attempted,

and so luckily reached the Bay of Mercy before the sledge parties set out.

Pim bore with him his commander's written "request" that a medical examination of the "Investigators" be held to determine their fitness for another season of duty; and McClure, fearing that by the desertion of the ship his exploit would be shorn of half its glory, manned a sledge and accompanied Pim back to Dealy Island to expostulate with his superior. He was still determined to salvage the *Investigator* and navigate the Passage; but Kellett, shocked at the condition of those whom he saw, absolutely refused his consent unless a sufficiency of men, declared medically fit, would volunteer for the service. The indomitable McClure made the toilsome journey back to Mercy Bay in the vain hope of fulfilling these conditions, but he could obtain ten volunteers only, instead of the twenty which Kellett had required, and his men with two or three exceptions were pronounced unfit. So orders were given to abandon the *Investigator*—her remaining stores were cached on land for the benefit of future castaways; her ensign and pennant were hoisted; and the sledges pulled away, the captain going ahead to pick out a course through the rugged sea ice, while officers and men indiscriminately hauled at the sledge ropes and helped their sick and tottering comrades over hummock and crevasse. So the North West Passage was made.

While the majority of the "Investigators" spent the early part of the summer at Dealy Island in what for them must have been a paradise of full rations and excused duty, Lieutenant Cresswell with a small party took the poor crazed Wyniatt through Barrow Strait to the *North Star* depot, and there boarded a supply-ship for England. He reached home in October 1853 and then only did the civilized world learn of the discovery made in Prince of Wales Strait three years before.

In the meantime McClintock and Meham had set out on their spring journeys. Meham skirted the south shore of Melville Island, struck west across the frozen sea and, passing Eglinton Island, reached the north-westernmost of the Canadian group, fittingly named Prince Patrick in honour of the Irishmen who had taken the lead in polar work since Franklin's disappearance. McClintock crossed to the north shore of Melville Island, and

charted its coast to the NW. along with those parts of Eglinton and Prince Patrick Islands which Meham had not covered. He travelled a record 1,148 miles on the round trip. (A notice deposited by McClintock on the north shore of Prince Patrick Island was picked up, still legible, by Stefánsson and delivered to his widow, Lady McClintock, in 1921.) At the same time Sherard Osborn and Commander Richards of Belcher's detachment had mapped the north shores of Cornwallis and Bathurst Islands and that part of Melville Island which lay to the east of McClintock's starting-point. The woeful misdirection of the search for Franklin had resulted in the charting, within the short space of six years, of the entire Canadian archipelago up to latitude 77° N. with the exception of a few gaps soon to be filled in by McClintock in the *Fox*.

There was a disastrous sequel to these achievements. The period of navigation in the summer of 1853 was short. The *Resolute* and *Intrepid* on their way home found Barrow Strait choked with ice, and themselves frozen in for another season. The same fate befell Sir Edward Belcher's two ships in Wellington Channel. In the ensuing spring Belcher (most unwarrantably in the opinion of his officers) ordered all four ships to be abandoned. Thus McClure and the "Investigators" were again thrown on the ice and had to tramp another 150 miles to Beechey Island where the *North Star* was still at anchor. The arrival of two supply-ships from England permitted all crews to be evacuated without excessive inconvenience, but on the way out Belcher gave further offence to his officers by failing to call at Port Leopold, where, they observed, the crew of the *Enterprise*, now unreported for two years, would naturally have gone if their ship had been cast away in the eastern region. Such was the humiliating end to six years of heroic endeavour.

About the time that Belcher took his crews out of the Arctic by way of Lancaster Sound, Collinson in the *Enterprise* made his exit through Bering Strait. As already noted he had spent the winter of 1851-1852 to the south of Banks Land. In the spring of 1852 he explored Prince of Wales Sound, and proved the Wollaston Land of Richardson and Kendall to be part of Victoria Island. He then passed through Dolphin and Union Strait, and

wintered in Cambridge Bay. From the Eskimos of this area he obtained two relics of the lost expedition, a bolt, which might have been part of a ship's engine, and a fragment of a door frame or hatchway. It was one of his misfortunes that he was unable to report these finds for two and a half years, by which time the far more conclusive discoveries of Rae had been made. In the spring of 1853 he took two sledges up the eastern shore of Victoria Island, passing at one point within twenty miles of the route taken by Franklin's crews in their fatal march down the opposite coast. He was thwarted in his purpose of dividing his party and sending one sledge over to King William Land by the roughness of the ice, which compelled him at times to harness both crews to one sledge and advance in relays; and so, by no defect of judgement but by the cruellest ill luck, he missed by a few miles the discovery which he had traversed many thousands of leagues to effect. His voyage home by way of Bering Strait was a troubled one: he was frozen in for his third winter on the north shore of Alaska, finally broke loose in July 1854 and, returning by way of Hong Kong and the Cape of Good Hope, reached England in May 1855 after an absence of five years and four months. If not the longest cruise in history, this was certainly the most arduous.

Collinson excelled all his contemporaries in his care of health and morale. Three seasons in the Arctic were fatal to the crews of the *Erebus* and *Terror*; the same period damaged the morale and ruined the health of the "Investigators". But the men of the *Enterprise* left the Arctic in such excellent spirits that when they met the *Plover* off Alaska they insisted on cheering *her* crew with one of the dramatic representations on which they prided themselves. Three men only out of sixty-five died in a period of five years and four months; and Collinson asserted that the dives of Hong Kong did his men more harm than thirty-six months in the Polar Sea.

His construction of a billiard table at Cambridge Bay is an illustration of his resourcefulness: "The skittle alley proved a great resource to our people, giving them healthful exercise in a spot protected from the wind which seldom admitted of our going abroad. Seeing that something was required to aid it, a billiard room was built, the table being formed of blocks of snow,

the upper surface of which was puddled, and an ice rim frozen around it; fresh water was then poured upon it, which froze into a compact sheet; but many bubbles appearing on the surface, it had to be scraped; the pockets were then cut; and finding our ice cushions not sufficiently elastic, the carpenter was not to be balked, but getting a walrus hide, and stuffing it with oakum, he made capital cushions; and then finding the grape-shot we had recourse to for balls too heavy, he produced some out of our *lignum-vitæ*, which, considering he had no turning-lathe, quite surprised me. I do not suppose that any of the men had ever played at billiards before, so they could not complain of the table; but the thing took admirably, and gave them what I wanted, occupation off the lower deck of their own accord."

It was the opinion of Admiral Sir G. H. Richards (himself a polar traveller of note) that "the voyage of the *Enterprise* was the most meritorious of them all"; and, measuring it by the sheer quality of the effort, apart from the success which no effort can guarantee, he did not unfairly describe it. Collinson had conducted a diligent search in the Arctic for over three years, had discovered clues, and had almost reached the scene of the Franklin disaster. He brought ship and crew safely home, after a cruise which, in duration and difficulty, far exceeded those of Magellan and Drake, out-Parrying Parry in ingenious devices for the occupation and amusement of his men. It was his misfortune that, wherever he went, McClure or Rae had been ahead of him. He made few original discoveries; the relics which might have directed search to the right quarter, ante-dating Rae's by more than a year, were only reported seven months after his; and, finally, chance restricted his search to the wrong side of Victoria Strait. His very merits tended to impair his fame: the hardships and privations, which his management had spared the men of the *Enterprise*, added to the glamour of the disastrous but sensational cruise of the *Investigator*.

The discovery and actual achievement of a North West Passage (albeit an ice-choked one that had been traversed partly on foot), won for McClure and the "Investigators" tremendous popular applause. The captain received a knighthood, the crew the thanks of Parliament, and both, substantial monetary rewards. Sir Edward Belcher was court-martialled for the igno-

minious desertion of his four ships, but a certain ambiguity in his instructions, coupled with his own ill health (brought on, it is only fair to add, by exposure and exertions for which his age unfitted him), secured him a rather grudging acquittal.

There was a curious sequel to his trial. While the fate of the *Resolute* was a subject of judicial enquiry at Sheerness, that stout old vessel superseded all argument by working free from her icy prison and drifting nearly a thousand miles into Baffin Bay, where she was picked up by a Yankee whaling skipper, and taken to New London, Connecticut. The United States Congress, with a courtesy unparalleled in the history of international relations, bought the derelict for forty thousand dollars, and returned her refitted to the British Admiralty. It was hoped in Great Britain that this act of generosity would encourage the government to make a fresh effort to solve the Franklin mystery, but Belcher's miserable débâcle had sickened the authorities of polar work, and all appeals for another expedition were rejected. But for the energy and self-sacrifice of Lady Franklin, it would have been left to the Americans, Hall and Schwatka, to bring back the first authentic intelligence of the disaster which had befallen the *Erebus* and *Terror*.

## The Voyage of the "Fox", 1857-1859

THE British Admiralty had been induced to persevere in the search for Sir John Franklin for six years by the conviction that it was impossible for one ship, much less two, to disappear in the frozen seas without leaving a trace behind. At the worst, the ice which crushed the ships would afford their crews a retreat to land (never far distant in the archipelago), where, if they could not survive, they might at least leave a memorial to their fate. Yet thousands of miles of coast had been examined without bringing any certain clue to light. Penny had picked up a charred board in Wellington Channel; Rae had found a small piece of wreckage in Victoria Strait; but neither the one nor the other bore any mark of identification. Franklin's orders had directed him through Barrow Strait or up Wellington Channel, both of which had been subjected to a painstaking search; the idea that he had discovered and sailed down Peel Sound was not seriously considered. The only remaining possibility seemed to be that the *Erebus* and *Terror* had sailed for home, and been overwhelmed by a gale in the broad waters of Baffin Bay.

This theory had scarcely been advanced when news reached England totally disproving it. In the autumn of 1853 the Hudson's Bay Company had dispatched Dr. Rae to explore the west side of Boothia Isthmus, and connect his former discoveries in Committee Bay with "the Magnetic Pole" of Ross. He wintered for the second time at Repulse Bay, and striking west in the spring, discovered Rae Strait, exposed the calamitous error of James Ross in 1830 and proved King William Land an island—eight years too late. From the natives of that region he learned that four years before (actually it was six—the Eskimos always



had trouble in communicating ideas of time and distance) a party of forty Europeans had been seen dragging a boat and some sledges southward along the west shore of King William Land, and that, later in the season but before the disruption of the ice, a number of corpses had been seen on the continent, and five more on an island which, from the description given it, Rae judged to be the Montreal Island of Sir George Back. In confirmation of their story the Eskimos sold Rae a few relics—Sir John Franklin's Order of Merit, and silverware bearing the crests and initials of various officers of the expedition.

Rae must have been tempted to search for a more precise record, among other reasons because only thus could he establish an indisputable claim to the Admiralty reward. He reflected, however, that such a step meant the prolongation of costly and fruitless endeavour elsewhere, and with commendable public spirit he returned to York Factory and thence to England with his report.

There was no questioning the genuineness of the relics nor the probable accuracy of the story which accompanied them; and the Admiralty after some hesitation granted Rae £10,000 for ascertaining the fate of Franklin's crews. Despite Lady Franklin's protests, this body now contented itself with having Chief Factor Anderson of the Hudson's Bay Company sent down Back's Fish River with two canoes to add what he could to the report of Rae. Anderson found a good deal of wood and ironware, plainly obtained from the lost ships, at the Eskimo encampments near the river's mouth; but without an interpreter he could get little information from the natives; his canoes were in no condition to make the crossing to King William Land; so the priceless records of the expedition remained undiscovered.

It was, however, fairly evident that sledge parties had reached the continent near the mouth of the Fish River. Sherard Osborn calculated that, without the techniques which he and McClintock had introduced into sledging, they could not have come over 150 miles. The inference was that the *Erebus* and *Terror* had entered Victoria Strait from the north, permitting their crews to reach the mainland over sea ice, and fulfill with grim irony Franklin's prediction that if he could reach Simpson Strait, his task would be done and the Passage accomplished.

The Parliamentary Committee acknowledged the justice of this claim, and conferred rewards on the "Investigators" for the finding, not of *the*, but of a North West Passage; though Dr. Armstrong, with characteristic lack of delicacy, reiterated his belief in the priority of McClure's discovery.

Franklin's widow, who had spent half her fortune in attempting his rescue, was prepared to sacrifice the rest in establishing his last and greatest title to fame. She first addressed a memorial to the Prime Minister, Lord Palmerston, urging the national disgrace of leaving incomplete a search which had engaged the interest of all civilized nations, and imploring him to use the *Resolute* to gather the bones of the dead, and to save from destruction "their last written words, so precious to their bereaved relatives and friends". This appeal was debated so long that Lady Franklin was deterred from sending her own expedition in 1856: on its final rejection she bought and fitted for the polar service the *Fox*, a yacht of 170 tons, with auxiliary steam power; and gave the command to Captain Leopold McClintock, who thus, after seven years of strenuous but obscure service in the ice-fields, was granted the opportunity for distinction which an independent command alone could confer.

While Captain Collinson relieved Lady Franklin of the business management of the expedition, McClintock devoted himself to the mustering of officers and crew. He was hardly a loser by the refusal of the Admiralty to grant leaves of absence to certain officers whose services he particularly desired, for he secured in their place two first-rate men, Lieutenant W. R. Hobson, who had served in the *Plover* on the coast of Alaska, and Captain Allen Young, of the Mercantile Marine. Young contributed £500 to the cost of the expedition, and, like the two naval officers, gave his services gratuitously: "I will receive no pay, if it is to come from Lady Franklin's resources," he wrote to Collinson. Carl Petersen, the Dane who had served as Eskimo interpreter on the Penny and Kane expeditions, accepted a berth with the words: "McClintock I know; with him will I serve." Notwithstanding the hardships of the service, McClintock's old shipmates competed eagerly for enrolment: he was able to include seventeen veterans of the Arctic in a ship's company of twenty-five. "You are sure to succeed this time," wrote one of his former sledges-

mates to Harvey, the *Fox's* quartermaster, "for you have got the captain that will not turn back before he finishes the work he goes out to do." Sir James Ross and Captain William Smyth, who in 1848 had been his sponsors in the polar service, banqueted him before he left London for the port of Aberdeen. McClintock, the soberest of realists, must have reflected ruefully on how many lucky chances depended the success which his comrades of all ranks so cheerfully predicted.

As it proved, he was to win his laurels the hard way. The *Fox* sailed late in June 1857, and after a good crossing called at a number of Greenland ports where she took on dogs and two Eskimo drivers. She then ran north towards Melville Bay, whence it was hoped to find a passage west across the north water. But by one of those perverse accidents to which Parry alludes, a number of icebergs had taken the ground in mid-channel and caused a congestion in the southward moving pack. In trying to get around this obstacle the *Fox* was beset for weeks and compelled to winter in the heart of the ice.

In the eight months of her imprisonment she was drifted back on her tracks thirteen hundred miles, from just south of latitude  $76^{\circ}$  to  $63^{\circ} 30' N.$ —well out of the Arctic Circle. In the spacious waters of Baffin Bay and Davis Strait she was spared the frightful pressures which the *Terror* had had to endure in Frozen Strait, though alarming convulsions sometimes occurred nearby. The men, kept busy at drill in sledging operations, especially the construction of snow houses and in attendance at school, passed the winter as happily, if not as safely, as they would have done in a Greenland harbour. In the comparatively warm waters into which the ship had drifted spring came early; the ice broke up in a gale on April the 25th; and after a nerve-wracking run of twelve hours through the tumultuously heaving pack, the *Fox* reached open water and set a course for the Greenland coast which she had quitted the autumn before.

On April the 28th, 1858, McClintock put into the port of Holsteinborg to take on fresh meat, and mail to Lady Franklin the information that twelve months had been totally lost with the prolonged anxiety and added expense which that involved. Putting back to sea he worked his way up the coast in company with a number of whalers, and again narrowly escaped shipwreck.

The lookout failed until too late to distinguish a reef crowned with ice from the floating masses which surrounded it: the *Fox* went aground, and, deserted by the ebbing tide, soon lay over at an angle of thirty-five degrees: "The slightest shake must have caused her to fall over on her side . . . The dogs, after repeated ineffectual attempts to lie upon the deck, quietly coiled themselves upon such parts of the lee gunwale as remained above water and went to sleep." There was little danger: the sea was calm, and several whalers within signalling distance, but it must have been a time of cruel anxiety for the captain, who, after years of toilsome apprenticeship, saw his first independent command about to terminate in ignominious failure. Luckily the returning tide refloated the ship and she continued her course without injury.

Early July found the *Fox*, at last on the west side of Baffin Bay, contending with a furious gale, during which the ship was nearly driven to leeward and dashed to pieces by the sea-beaten pack. "Yet these are only preliminaries," remarks the captain; "it is to be hoped that the poor *Fox* has many more lives to spare." Apparently she had; for after a stormy passage, she got through Lancaster Sound, reached the now familiar Beechey Island, and replenished her coal bunkers from the depot planted there by Sir Edward Belcher.

The commander of the *Fox* had been charged by Lady Franklin with three duties: the rescue of any possible survivors of the *Erebus* and *Terror*; the recovery of the documents, public and private, of the expedition; and the confirmation of its claim to have been beforehand with the discovery of the Passage. McClintock cherished two other purposes: to fill in the gaps in the map of the archipelago; and actually to sail through the North West Passage. Part of the west coast of Boothia Peninsula remained unexplored, as did the south half of Prince of Wales Island and the north-east shore of Victoria Island. It was not positively known that the two latter masses were divided, but McClintock, believing that the exceptionally heavy ice which James Ross had seen at Cape Felix in 1830, and which had, presumably, been Franklin's undoing, was the very polar pack which Parry and McClure had met with in Melville Sound, inferred the existence of the connecting channel now called by his name. This question

he wished to settle, and he hoped also, if permitted, like Franklin, to approach Cape Felix, to take advantage of Rae's most recent discovery, and, using King William Land as a shield against the "tremendous Polar pack", to pass to the east of that island into Simpson Strait. Once there, as Sir John Franklin had pathetically remarked, his work was done: he could easily reach the waters twice navigated by Collinson beyond Cambridge Bay, and win for Lady Franklin the honour of sending the first ship through the North West Passage.

To the south-west of Beechey Island, on the other side of Barrow Strait, lay the opening of Peel Sound, which had been explored for some distance—on its eastern shore—by Sir James Ross, on the western side by Lieutenant Browne. Down this channel it was practically certain the *Erebus* and *Terror* had sailed; and to it the *Fox*, now hot on the scent, directed her course. "We shot gallantly past Limestone Island, and are now steering down Peel Strait; all of us in a state of wild excitement—a mingling of anxious hopes and fears."

Fifty years later Roald Amundsen was to sail through that strait and, by following the course laid down by McClintock, to achieve the honour which McClintock coveted in vain. For twenty-five miles down the channel the *Fox* was stopped by ice—"unbroken ice, extending across it from shore to shore", wrote the captain disconsolately. When it was pointed out to him that the floes were of one year's growth only, and much decayed, he replied bitterly that he had been down that coast with Ross; the channel contracted for another sixty miles, and the congestion would be worst at the narrows. The sharpness of the disappointment only hastened his decision: he put about and, circling Somerset Island, made for the east end of Bellot Strait.

This channel, which divides North Somerset from Boothia Peninsula, is twenty miles long, and a mile wide at its narrowest point. It somewhat resembles a Greenland fiord, says McClintock, being hemmed in by lofty cliffs on both sides, and so nearly straight that from the narrows the open sea is visible in both directions. Into this strait—his last chance, if he was to make King William Land on shipboard—McClintock thrust the *Fox*, and got halfway through: from the masthead the surf could be seen breaking against the headland which marked his goal,

when "five or six miles of heavy pack intervened". At the turn of the tide, which flowed through the strait with a violence proportioned to its narrowness, the *Fox* was caught, "wildly hurled about by various whirlpools and rushes of the tide", and swept back to Regent's Inlet.

Time and again did the *Fox* dare the powerful eddies of Bellot Strait, and finally got through, only to find herself still hemmed in by the ice which encircled its western outlet. From the summit of Cape Bird, McClintock ascertained the belt to be only four miles wide; but it would not dissolve; and there was nothing for it but to winter where he was, and carry out his search by the arduous process of sledging. He took the ship back to Port Kennedy at the east end of the strait, somewhat lengthening the forthcoming sledge journeys but vastly improving his chances of an easy exit when those sledge journeys were accomplished, and set about the preparations which his altered prospects made necessary.

The information gathered by Rae placed the Franklin disaster so far to the south that his crews had gone towards the mainland instead of following the more hopeful course of Sir John Ross and making for Barrow Strait and the whalers; and so far to the east that they had preferred Back's Fish River to the more hospitable Mackenzie region. As Rae and Collinson had found no trace of any account on the west side of Victoria Strait, King William Land became the certain repository of records if any records were to be found. Nevertheless, McClintock proposed to examine every mile of coast which previous expeditions had left untouched. Young was appointed to search the south half of Prince of Wales Island from Browne's farthest on the east side to Sherard Osborn's on the west. On his way back he was to examine the uncharted part of North Somerset from the farthest south of Ross in 1849 to Bellot Strait. The two naval officers were to go south to Cape Felix; there Hobson was to turn right to search the west shore of King William Land, while McClintock passed through the Straits of Ross and Rae, visited Montreal Island, and came back by way of the west shore of King William Land to provide a twofold search of that all-important region. With rare generosity McClintock gave his junior the first chance

at the most promising field of discovery, to ensure, in event of success, his speedy promotion.

The winter period of inaction was short: the late autumn was spent in advancing food depots along the intended lines of march; in mid-February, as soon as the peak of the cold weather was past, McClintock and Petersen, with one other man, took a dog sledge down the west shore of Boothia to make enquiries of the Eskimos whom they expected to find there. In this they were not disappointed: near the magnetic pole of Ross they came upon a settlement of some forty-five souls from whom they were able to purchase numerous articles belonging to the lost ships. One man told Petersen that they came from a three-masted vessel which had been crushed in the ice near Cape Felix; none of the settlement, he said, had witnessed this, or seen any of the crew alive; the relics had been picked up on an island in a river where they saw nothing but skeletons and graves. The older members of this group remembered the 1829-1833 expedition, and enquired kindly after Sir James Ross. "The men were stout, hearty fellows, and the women arrant thieves, but all were good-humoured and friendly." McClintock returned to the ship with a medal, silverware, and other tokens of the lost expedition, apparently too excited by the success of this preliminary journey to note that he had ended an epoch by completing the coastal map of the North American continent.

Early in April he was off again with Hobson and Young on their respective spring journeys. Each party consisted of six men, and two sledges, one man-handled, the other drawn by dogs. Petersen accompanied the commander, who was most likely to meet Eskimos; Dr. Walker, the surgeon, with five men, remained in charge of the ship.

Young set out directly for the west; while McClintock and Hobson travelled together for some distance the inner shore of Boothia. On the way they met twelve members of the settlement already visited, and a young Eskimo blurted out the information which his elders evidently wished to conceal, that *both* ships had been seen: one had been nipped and sunk; the other, after drifting ashore, had been boarded and ransacked by the natives. (McClintock supposed that the Eskimos had tried to hide the

existence of the wreck in order to keep for themselves the treasures she contained.) One body had been found on the ship, that of a large man with long teeth. The white men had gone away to a large river, where, in the following spring, their bodies had been found. The Eskimos who gave this information belonged, of course, to a different group from that met by Rae—they had seen the bodies early in the summer, but knew nothing of the ships.

A day or two later Hobson and his chief parted, the former to go down the west, the latter the east side of what was henceforth to be known as *King William Island*. Hobson was complaining of pain and stiffness in the legs; luckily for the success of his mission his commander did not suspect the cause. McClintock, for his part, descended Ross Strait, and entered the region which Ross had identified as land, and Rae had proved to be sea. On *King William Island*, near the top of Rae Strait, he found another Eskimo settlement. These people confirmed the existence of the wreck; there had been many books, they added, long since destroyed by the weather. One talkative old woman described the fatal march to Petersen: the white men “fell down and died as they walked along”; some had been buried, some not. Her own tribe had not seen this, but had found the bodies in the ensuing winter. It is curious that, though the narrative sounded like that of an eyewitness, neither this woman, nor any of the natives would admit having actually seen the tragedy they reported, being, perhaps, restrained by a sense of shame, natural but quite irrational; for it was obvious that where the poverty of the land compelled the inhabitants to disperse themselves in small groups, no effort could be made to find food for a compact body of over a hundred strangers.

Crossing Simpson Strait the little band entered the Fish River estuary, and on May the 15th reached Montreal Island, more than three hundred miles from its base. A search of this place and the adjoining mainland revealed nothing but a few scraps of metal: the snow and other wintry conditions, which made the search by sledge possible, were a great hindrance to its thorough execution. It was with an anxious heart that on May the 19th, McClintock turned his face to the north and sought



again the shores of King William Island. He had not yet succeeded, and the area within which success could be looked for was beginning to shrink.

It was unfortunate that he had met no Eskimos in the estuary to give him guidance; for in quitting the mainland and recrossing Simpson Strait he was literally passing through the graveyard of the men for whom he sought. As he took to the sea ice near where Back's Fish River journey had ended he passed a little to the west of an inlet now known as Starvation Cove. There, as was afterwards learned, thirty or forty men had lain down to die, and there the journals, which they had carried to the very last, were left to be the sport of wind and rain. And as he approached King William Island, not far to his right lay the grave of Lieutenant Le Vescomte of the *Erebus*, Franklin's young friend; and in 1931 six skeletons were found on a nearby islet (one of the Todd group), perhaps the very ones supposed by Rae to have been seen on Montreal Island.

The western coast of King William Island is a gloomy and desolate region which rises from the sea in a series of rocky terraces, set off here and there by boulders of dark gneiss. Up this coast McClintock and his party proceeded, keeping a sharp lookout, for they were now on the shore along which the retreating crews *must* have marched—a corridor with the rock pile of the island on one hand and the chaotic pack on the other. On a low wind-swept ridge, just above the beach, they found a skeleton with a few rags of clothing still adhering to it—that of a steward or officer's servant, apparently. The poor fellow lay on his face as he had fallen; no comrade had turned back to revive and assist him. As these bones, and the rags which marked them as those of a naval rating, lay on the hither side of Cape Herschel, in the area explored by Simpson and Dease, they afforded grim but incontestable proof that Franklin's men had done what they set out to do.

A few miles to the west stood the cairn erected in 1839 by Thomas Simpson; and to this McClintock pressed eagerly, for here, if anywhere, he might expect to find a record of the lost crews; and furthermore he hoped to obtain notice of Hobson's movements and success. Simpson's monument proved to have

been opened and partly broken down. The sledge crew completed its demolition; and laboriously hacked at the frozen ground beneath and around it without bringing anything to light. This was a grievous disappointment, for McClintock felt sure that it *had* contained something. Simpson had built an empty monument: the inquisitive Eskimos would have torn it down to the ground unless they had first discovered its contents. They had only partially pulled it down; therefore they had found contents, which could only be something placed there by the Franklin expedition. "It was with a feeling of deep regret and much disappointment that I left this spot without finding some certain record of those martyrs to their country's fame. Perhaps in all the wide world there will be few spots more hallowed in the recollection of English seamen than this cairn on Cape Herschel."

The next day brought McClintock the well-earned reward for many years of toil and frustration. Twelve miles beyond Cape Herschel he came upon a small newly-built cairn which marked Hobson's farthest from the opposite direction. It contained a note for himself: Hobson had not seen a trace of the wreck, nor had he met any Eskimos, but in a pile of stones on Point Victory—the farthest of James Ross in 1830—he had discovered the document "so ardently sought for", the only substantial written record of the lost expedition which has ever come to light. On a regular Admiralty form this information had been entered:

"28 of May 1847. H.M. Ships *Erebus* and *Terror* wintered in the ice in lat. 70° 05' N., long. 98° 23' W." (a few miles to the north and a little to the west of Cape Felix), "having wintered in 1846-7" (a mistake for 1845-6) "at Beechey Island . . . after having ascended Wellington Channel to lat. 77°, and returned by the west side of Cornwallis Island.

"Sir John Franklin commanding the expedition.

"All well.

"Party consisting of 2 officers and 6 men left the ship on Monday 24th May, 1847.

"Gm. Gore, Lieut.

"Chas. F. Des Voeux, Mate."

To this, the original, there had been added in another hand :

"April 25, 1848.—H.M. ships *Terror* and *Erebus* were deserted on the 22nd of April, 5 leagues NNW. of this, having been beset since 12th September, 1846. The officers and crews, consisting of 105 souls, under the command of Captain F. R. M. Crozier, landed here in lat. 69 37 42 N., long. 98 41 W. Sir John Franklin died on the 11th June, 1847; and the total loss by death in the expedition has been to this date 9 officers and 15 men.

"James Fitzjames,

"Captain, H.M.S. *Erebus*."

This was endorsed :

"F. R. M. Crozier, Captain and Senior Officer, and start on to-morrow 26th for Back's Fish River."

For the rest, as Robert Falcon Scott was to write in the same hopeless situation : "Our dead bodies must tell the tale."

One more discovery added a little to the information thus acquired. After rounding Cape Crozier, the westernmost point of the Island, McClintock came upon a boat mounted on a sledge which contained two skeletons and a number of other relics, silverware, watches, and books, including a *Manual of Private Devotion*, inscribed by Sir George Back to Graham Gore. (This latter was returned to Back who kept it in his drawing-room under glass to the day of his death.) It was pathetic to note that the boat had been fitted with paddles, and "equipped with the utmost care for the ascent of the Great Fish River"; it had not got past Cape Crozier, and the direction in which its head was lying made it evident that the men who accompanied it had been on their way back to the ships, and left it in a bay, with two men to guard it, while the rest made the journey unencumbered.

Hobson had seen this boat, and also had found three other cairns which, however, added nothing to what was already known. But this was sufficient for McClintock to reconstruct the last voyage of Sir John Franklin in a manner which no subsequent revelations have to any extent modified. In his first season he had gone up Wellington Channel, and, finding that course unpromising, had returned to Barrow Strait by the west

side of Cornwallis Island, and had wintered at Beechey Island. In the summer of 1846, being hindered from passing to the right of Cape Walker as his instructions required, he went down the channel he had discovered on its left—later Peel Sound—and, passing between Boothia and Prince of Wales Island by what is now Franklin Strait, was brought up by ice near Cape Felix, within a hundred miles of his goal, and enjoying a reasonable assurance that ice only, and not land, lay between him and it. The winter of 1846–1847, spent in the pack, can have been marked by no serious disaster, for when Graham Gore was sent forward, presumably to place beyond doubt the expedition's success, he left a cheerful note at Point Victory. On a clear day Gore could have assured himself of the continuity of Victoria with Simpson Strait without going beyond Cape Crozier; and it is a pleasant thought that he may have got back with the news before Franklin's death on June the 11th. Certainly it was not then imagined that the ships were irretrievably trapped; all were confidently expecting release and the triumphant completion of their mission in August. When the season passed and the ice did not relax its grip, the situation was instantly transformed: the loss of two months meant the loss of twelve. Escape could not be looked for before August 1848, and the ships were supplied up to July only.

The plight of Crozier's men during the third winter can be pictured from the known experience of the "Investigators". Reduced rations brought on lethargy; the men became unwilling to hunt—a hard and unrewarding task in any case—for the land was thirteen miles away, and poorer in game than Banks Land. Antiscorbutics began to lose their potency, as is shown by the total of twenty-four deaths reported by Fitzjames. The abandonment of the ships in April was probably necessitated by an onset of scurvy which threatened fatally all on board, and not by famine, as some supplies were evidently left behind. The retreat might have been directed to Fury Point and thence by Sir John Ross's route to Barrow Strait, but doubtless Crozier felt it imperative to meet the game as it moved north in the spring, in order to obtain fresh meat. McClintock had not then made sledging a science; no depots were advanced, and the sledges were overloaded. The march was slower than had been anticipated,

and before the crews had advanced many miles it was found necessary to send back a detachment for fresh supplies. These men apparently stayed with the ships, where they may have lived for months; they never picked up the two comrades whom they had left behind with the boat. Of the main body, some reached the south shore of King William Island, and some the continent, leaving their bones as mute testimony that the Passage had been won; but by starvation or scurvy all alike perished utterly.

So unique and appalling a disaster naturally raises the question of whether it was not due to the negligence or mismanagement of those by whom the expedition was directed. In this connection it should be noted that the crews of two other ships, similarly trapped, owed their escape to accident, and not primarily to the care and forethought of their leaders. The *Victory* of Sir John Ross happened to be frozen in close in shore, where game was plentiful and the Eskimos most friendly and helpful. Ross was able to obtain enough fresh meat to preserve his small crew (some twenty-five men) from scurvy, and to effect his retreat by using Parry's old depot at Fury Point as a stepping-stone. Crozier's party was five times as numerous, thirteen miles from a land much poorer in game, and condemned by its very success—it had penetrated too deeply into the Arctic waste to return by the way it had come, especially when it was supposed (incorrectly, as it happened) that the supplies at Fury Point had been carried off by whalers. As for McClure's men, they would have died like Crozier's, as was freely admitted at the time, had it not been for the timely arrival of the *Resolute*.

Modern critics have accused the retreating crews of helpless incompetence for failing to live off what one of them goes so far as to designate as "a land of plenty"—an allegation which is in flat contradiction to the report of McClintock, who marched up that fatal coast in the same month as Crozier and Fitzjames marched down it. "Nothing can exceed the gloom and desolation of King William's Island," writes McClintock; "it is not by any means the 'land abounding in deer and musk oxen' which we expected to find." And in summarizing Hobson's journal for the month of May, he adds: "During that period one bear and five willow grouse were shot; and one wolf and a few foxes were

seen. One poor fox was either so desperately hungry, or so charmed by the sight of animated beings, that he played about the party until the dogs snapped him up although in harness and dragging the sledge at the time. A few gulls were seen, but not until after the first week in June." The accidents of nature conspired to bring about a wholesale disaster: the gales which blew down McClintock Channel made the north-west shore of the Island a place of peculiar barrenness. Dr. William Gibson, who knows King William Island well, in dissenting from Stefánsson's criticism of the British explorers, observes: "A similar number of Eskimos could not have marched in a body for anything like the distance attempted and have subsisted upon the game they came across on the way", because it was too early for the caribou and wild-fowl migrations. Crozier's only resource, he adds, would have been to spread out his force and advance in small, scattered detachments. His tone implies that he does not consider that this would have been a practical expedient—and with good reason: Miertsching tells a piteous tale of the weakness and debility of the "Investigators" after *their* third winter; yet at the time of the medical examination which showed all but two or three unfit for duty, only two had died out of sixty-five. Crozier had lost twenty-four out of 129: the rest can hardly have been in a condition for marching, much less hunting. One polar season had destroyed the crew of Jens Munck with scurvy: the medical science of the nineteenth century could not guarantee a ship's company against the effects of three.

From the circumstance that neither he nor Hobson had seen a trace of the wrecked ship, which they were sure to have done if she had been cast up on the beach, McClintock concluded that she had been carried through the narrows of Victoria Strait and grounded on one of the islets to the south of Cape Crozier. There her snow-covered wreckage could easily have been overlooked by passing sledge crews. Years after, the Eskimos told Captain C. F. Hall that she had drifted through to Simpson Strait; and in this connection a curious tale later came to light. Long after Chief Factor Anderson's journey down the Fish River, one of his men confessed that while searching the shores of the estuary he had seen the masts of a ship to seaward silhouetted in the even-

ing light, but in his weariness had kept it to himself in order to expedite a return to camp. In that desolate region a tired and hungry man could see queer things in the wild glare of the sunset. Be that as it may, the wreck of the *Erebus* and *Terror* lies somewhere in Simpson or Victoria Strait with the wreckage of those who manned them :

“There’s a wondrous golden harbour, far beyond the setting  
sun,  
Where a gallant ship may anchor, when her fighting days  
are done”,

and there assuredly Franklin’s battered vessels have found a haven with Grenville’s *Revenge* and the destroyers which fought to the death in Narvik Fiord.

McClintock completed his own careful survey of the shore-line twice traversed by Hobson, and then made all haste to get back to the *Fox* before the thaw set in. A note picked up on the way informed him of his lieutenant’s serious illness; on reaching the ship he found him weak, but beginning to recover. He had been attacked by scurvy early in the journey, and after walking lame for six weeks, finished the return trip on the sledge, and quite unable to stand. The commander was also alarmed by Dr. Walker’s report on Young. The latter, having ascertained that McClintock Channel did exist, and fearing that his provisions were not sufficient for its thorough exploration, had sent most of his party back to the ship, and, though a novice both to Arctic travel and to the management of dogs, had gone on with the dog sledge and one seaman only. He mapped the coast of Prince of Wales Island from its southern extremity to Osborn’s farthest in 1851, and returned to the ship so ill that Dr. Walker positively forbade a renewal of the work. But the old merchant skipper directed his subordinate to the place whither most junior officers are consigned who offer unwelcome and unsolicited advice, and was off again in three days. McClintock’s helpers were worthy of him.

The younger officers were breaking down, but the captain himself seemed incapable of sickness or fatigue. Within a week of his return from King William Island he set forth again with

the fittest of his former sledge mates to follow up and rescue Young. In two days he met him, riding on the dog sledge, sick but triumphant; he had carried out his assignment by completing the maps of Prince of Wales and Somerset Islands, and adding four hundred miles of coastline to the chart. The only gap remaining in the archipelago was the north-east shore of Victoria Island; and the trend of this had been roughly defined by Young's observations from the opposite side of McClintock Channel.

Young's report confirmed his commander's earlier belief that the tremendous ocean pack poured from the Beaufort Sea into Melville Sound flowed on to the south-east, choking up Victoria Strait with the same heavy ice as had been all but fatal to McClure at Banks Land. Owing to this, he declared, there was no navigable Passage west of King William Island. But he was equally sure that it was only the ice off Bellot Strait which had prevented him from sailing through the North West Passage by passing, as he had intended, to the east of the Island. Had Sir John Franklin known of the eastern channel by way of Rae Strait, he would "probably have carried his ships safely through to Behring's Straits"; but, his charts showing land in that region, he "had but one course open to him, and that the one he followed". McClintock adds a little wistfully: "Perhaps some future voyager, profiting from the experience so fearfully and fatally acquired by the Franklin expedition, and the observations of Rae, Collinson, and myself, will succeed in carrying his ship through from sea to sea: at least he will be enabled to direct all his efforts in the true and only direction." In extreme old age he was to learn that Amundsen had sailed his *Gjoa* through from ocean to ocean by following the route he recommended.

Though McClintock plainly acquits Franklin of any rashness or negligence in entering the heavy ice of Victoria Strait, his indebtedness to the explorer's widow, which may somewhat have blinded his judgement, justifies further enquiry. When Franklin put his ships into the pack he knew nothing of its extent or durability—he had never heard of the continuous ice-stream. Normally the impermanence of such a hindrance was taken for granted. "There is nothing certain in this navigation from one hour to the next," Kellett had written to Belcher.



Furthermore, Franklin was not aware that the strait narrowed to the south and was obstructed by islets: he knew only that the waters explored by Dease, Simpson, and himself, all the way to Alaska, could be reached in less than twenty-four hours, given an open sea and a fair wind; in such a situation only a very timid man would have faltered or gone back. The gamble turned out ill; but, with all our after-knowledge, which of us will say that it was not worth it? Though it laid its author open to the taunt of failure, a generous and manly spirit can have nothing but sympathy and admiration for the brave old sailor who set out in his sixtieth year to achieve the goal of his life's ambition, and after battling his way towards it through five hundred miles of uncharted, ice-infested sea, was thwarted on the very threshold of success by an obstacle which only the lesson taught by his own disaster would have enabled him to surmount.

Posterity has not hesitated to endorse the judgement of McClintock that "to Franklin must be assigned the earliest discovery of the North West Passage": in truth the old seaman not only won the honour, but richly deserved it. He first had ventured on to the ocean which Hearne and Mackenzie had merely seen, and charted its coasts by a novel method of incalculable risk. Years after, when the geographical problem had been narrowed to linking his discoveries with those of Parry, he assumed the task and accomplished it: his lunge down Peel Strait was as sensational and, if the one-way route only is to be considered, as lucky as Parry's great dash to Melville Island. Parry must ever bear the palm for prudence, unsullied success, and the wise management of winter quarters. To McClintock belongs the credit for converting sledging from a risky and haphazard to an exactly calculated operation, and for using that method to explore the northern islands where no ship could penetrate. But for daring and sheer achievement Franklin stands alone; and succeeding generations have rewarded him by associating his name pre-eminently with the Passage, and by awarding second honours to the patient, industrious seaman who solved the mystery of his fate.

With the return of Young nothing remained for the explorers but to wait with cruel anxiety for the warm weather and

westerly winds which alone could give them release. When the ice broke up, east winds drove it across the Inlet and hemmed in the *Fox* behind miles of ragged, heaped-up pack. Thereupon the long-suffering captain checked his stores to ascertain whether he was supplied for another winter.

Though the crew of the *Fox* were spared another winter of hardship, their exit was not made easy or comfortable. On July the 28th the ice drifted out of Port Kennedy, taking the ship with it, but she was so roughly handled in the pack that she was lucky to recover an anchorage with her timbers still sound. Several days elapsed before friendly winds opened a channel of which McClintock cared to avail himself; after contending with ice and fog for a week, he got into the clear, and on August the 27th in the calm of an Arctic twilight he steamed slowly into the Greenland port of Godhavn. Two hundred and seventy-two years before, John Davis had assured Master Sanderson that "the Passage is very probable, and the execution easy"—how easy ten generations of mariners could testify; but the task was now done. The work of the British seaman in the Canadian Arctic was over.

McClintock concludes his narrative with an artless grace which befits the end of an epoch at once melancholy and glorious. He parted affectionately from his two Eskimos, who assured him that the men had treated them well, "just the same as brothers. . . . Even our dogs seemed to think the ship their natural abode; although landed at the settlement, they ran around the harbour to the point nearest the ship, and there, upon the rocks, spent the whole period of our stay." The men went ashore every night to dance "with a very limited quantity of rum-punch" for the Eskimo ladies; the officers yielded to a natural lethargy, and passed the time quietly with their friends, the Danish officials.

On the eve of their departure, Mr. Petersen's two nieces came on board ("Miss Sophia with scented cambric handkerchief and gloves—in other respects she adheres to the Eskimo costume", says her Irish host), got out the organ and staged a miniature concert. The scene was worthy of a dramatic artist—the gaunt and weary-eyed McClintock, in a few days to be the most famous of living seamen, reclining on the lower deck among the comrades who had so loyally served him, while the two Danish

lassies “sing together very sweetly” for them. A week later the *Fox* cleared Cape Farewell and steered away to the east, leaving behind her for ever the Arctic field of battle—the barren cliffs, the icy wastes, and the bones of those who had died in the conflict.



## Epilogue

SINCE the *Fox's* farewell, other explorers have worked at the task of adding to the record brought home by McClintock, Hobson, and Young. The first of these was Charles F. Hall, of Cincinnati, Ohio, who, after spending the years 1860–1862 on or near Baffin Land learning the Eskimo dialects, journeyed alone to King William Island, where he lived with the Eskimos for several years (1864–1869) and gathered what details he could of the fatal spring of 1848. On the south shore of the island he discovered bones, doubtfully identified as those of Franklin's young friend, Lieutenant Le Vescomte; these were forwarded to England, and buried in the Painted Hall, at Greenwich.

Later another journey was undertaken by Lieutenant Schwatka of the United States Army, in the hope of finding the records of the expedition, of which Hall had found no trace. He wintered near Chesterfield Inlet on Hudson Bay, and in April 1879 set out overland for King William Island with three white companions and a number of Eskimo auxiliaries. The party reached the Fish River estuary by way of an eastern tributary, the Hayes River, crossed Simpson Strait and ascended the west shore of King William Island, reaching Cape Felix on July the 1st. Then, retracing their course under the difficult conditions of the midsummer thaw, the explorers were able to discover a number of traces which snow had concealed from Hobson and McClintock. Bones found near Point Victory and certainly identified as those of Lieutenant Irving of the *Terror* were carried away and subsequently sent to that officer's relatives in Scotland. The return journey to Hudson Bay was made in the depth

of a particularly severe winter, and the supporting ship was re-joined at Marble Island in late March 1880. In the course of a year, travelling in all seasons, Schwatka had effected a march of three thousand miles; starting with supplies for one month only, he had supported his men throughout the period on caribou, wild-fowl, and fish—a notable exploit in all its aspects, and one that deserves to rank with the best achievements of Stefánsson. From the Eskimos of the Fish River region he had learned that thirty or forty of the lost men had died in a body in a cove on the west side of Point Richardson, and that their journals, which they had carried to the last, had perished with them; so, though he failed to bring back any written record, he succeeded in proving the futility of any further search directed to that purpose.

In 1903 Amundsen, following Franklin's course to Cape Felix, passed through Ross and Rae Straits, and berthed his ship in Gjoa Haven on the south shore of King William Island for two winters (1903-1905) before proceeding to the triumphant achievement of the North West Passage. During this stay one of his officers, Hansen by name, found traces of the lost crews, including a grave over which the generous-spirited Hall had placed the inscription: "Eternal honour to the discoverers of the North West Passage."

In 1923 Dr. Knud Rasmussen, an anthropologist and student of Eskimo customs, reached the hitherto unvisited Starvation Cove, and with the ensigns of Denmark and Great Britain flying at half-mast read the Burial Service over the remains of those gallant seamen which for three-quarters of a century had lain there in neglect. "The whole world is the tomb of brave men"—so it was not wholly unfitting that those heroes of English, Scottish, and Irish descent should receive the last rites of religion from a Dane.

Eight years later two officers of the Hudson's Bay Company, Gibson and Skinner, in making a survey west from Gjoa Haven, found remains on Tulloch Point, at the mouth of the Peffer River, and a considerable cluster of skeletons on one of the Todd Islets. It was these latter, perhaps, which Rae had wrongly supposed to have been seen on Montreal Island. It was in the region of the

Todd Islets, Dr. Gibson supposes, that the survivors of the lost crews quitted King William Island and struck across Simpson Strait to the continent. Point Richardson and Starvation Cove lay almost directly opposite. In 1936 Messrs. Learmouth and Sturrock found further relics a little to the west of Starvation Cove. From the circumstance that the bones lay very close to high-water mark they judged that the men had died before the break-up of the sea ice, a theory in keeping with the report made to Rae by his Eskimo informants.

In consequence of these various discoveries, and despite sundry ingenious theories to the contrary, we have every reason to suppose that the sturdiest of the Franklin survivors barely reached the Canadian mainland, and that all died within two or three months of the desertion of the ships. By no means all of Fitzjames's "105 souls" are accounted for, but, as Dr. Gibson points out, they made it a practice to bivouac low on the shore or sheltered by river banks, and many bodies must have been washed away by ocean tides or the waters of streams in summer flood.

Nevertheless, the circumstance that this reconstruction of the tragedy is founded on inference only, unsupported by any precise written record, has left the door open to various theories regarding the ultimate fate of ships and men which, however improbable, cannot be definitely contradicted. On the strength of an ill-supported Eskimo tradition, L. T. Burwash has supposed that the men who on McClintock's own showing returned to the ships managed to get one of them under control, and sailed around King William Island through the Straits of Victoria, Simpson, and Rae before being finally cast away near Matty Island. Gibson dismisses this hypothesis as "entirely illogical and unwarrantable". Recently Rear Admiral Noel Wright has based an elaborate argument on the following circumstance. In 1851 the brig *Renovation* reported having sighted two ships which answered the description of the *Erebus* and *Terror* resting on an ice-floe not far from the shores of Newfoundland. These, Admiral Wright insists, actually were the *Erebus* and *Terror*, which, like Kellett's *Resolute*, had broken away from the solid pack and drifted out into the Atlantic. The ship which was undoubtedly

boarded by the Eskimos in Victoria Strait was not, he suggests, one of Franklin's vessels but the *Investigator*, which had drifted out of Mercy Bay and been carried by the ice-stream through McClintock Channel to the shores of King William Island. The body found on board presents a difficulty—the "Investigators" had given Christian burial to those of their number who had died at Mercy Bay—but Admiral Wright rids himself of this problem by supposing that the "large man with long teeth" whom the Eskimos described was not a man at all but the figure-head of the *Investigator*; and by this ingenious resource builds up a theory which, however improbable, is incapable of formal disproof. But grossly improbable it remains. It is possible that a gale might have freed Franklin's ships from their icy prison and started them on a northerly drift; it is possible that they might have found their way out through Peel Sound, Barrow Strait, and Lancaster Sound unobserved by the rescue ships which were busy in those waters in 1848–1850. It is also barely possible that the captain of the *Renovation* was not aware that by a closer inspection of the two ships which answered the description of the *Erebus* and *Terror* he might have achieved the most enviable notoriety and entitled himself to a reward of £10,000—though each succeeding link in the chain of coincidence adds to the cumulative improbability of the theory it is meant to support. But Admiral Wright's elaborate hypothesis can hardly be reconciled with the simple ascertained facts: two ships were abandoned in Victoria Strait; one ship was subsequently boarded by the Eskimos. Admiral Wright will have it that the ships abandoned were the *Erebus* and *Terror*; the ship boarded, the *Investigator*. Well and good! To have been seen in the North Atlantic in 1851 the first named ships must have quitted Victoria Strait not later than 1849; the *Investigator* was seen securely frozen in Mercy Bay as late as the spring of 1854. That is, Admiral Wright would have us believe that the natives confused a ship which quitted the shore of King William Island not later than 1849 with a ship which can hardly have reached it before 1856. They may have done so, but a sane and unbiased judge would find it simpler to suppose that the report of the *Renovation* was false or related to some other ships. McClintock observed of the in-

formation brought back by Hall and Schwatka that it all tended to confirm his own reconstruction of the Franklin tragedy; he would not have modified this judgement in the least had he known the additional facts which a century of research has brought to light.







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*This book has been set in Linotype Pilgrim, a type face designed by Reynold S Stone, who based his design on drawings by the late Eric Gill. The italic is in effect a sloped roman, but relief is given to its appearance by the use of the cursive style of a, e, and g.*











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